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Opportunities and Challenges for The Future of Marketing

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Enhancing Resource Advantage Theory's Explanatory Power: A Step Toward "A General Theory of Marketing"

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1. INTRODUCTION

Resource Advantage Theory (R-A) has garnered tremendous attention within the marketing discipline as an alternative process Theory of Exogenous Market Competition to the traditional Neoclassical Economic Theory (NCT) and its derivative theories, most notably, Resource Base Theory , Transaction Cost Theory, Social exchange Theory and others. Although Hunt and Davis (2012) argue R-A Theory represents a clean break from the NCT tradition similarities remain. While Hunt (2010, p. 360) describes R-A Theory as "an interdisciplinary, evolutionary, disequilibrium-provoking process theory of competition, it remains a process theory of exogenous market competition. Further evidence of its exogenous market competition orientation is Hunt's (2010) including NCT's concept of Perfect Competition as a "special case" within the overall R-A Theory of Competition. Deligonul and Cavusgil (1997) argue these similarities are paradigmatic. Hence, R-A Theory and NCT are distant derivatives, i.e., Process Theories of Exogenous Market Competition. As such, both theories lack the essential behavioral framework necessary to explain its endogenous managerial decision making dimension.

R-A Theory, however, has the theoretical framework to incorporate the endogenous managerial dimensions of cooperation and competition essential for decision-making purposes. In essence, firms possess resources, heterogeneous and immobile, that constitute positions of comparative advantage in resources. These resources support competitive advantage in certain market segments. Market positions of competitive advantage then result in the firm's superior financial performance (Hunt 2010, 361). Critical to this competitive process is the acknowledgement that a firm's resource base include relational resources (Hunt 2010, 360).

2. THE ROLE OF RELATIONAL RESOURCES

Hunt (2010, 361) considers relationships with suppliers as a relational resource. A relational resource can be a tangible or intangible entity that enables the firm "to produce efficiently and/or effectively a market offering that has value for some marketing segment(s)." Resources are heritable, durable, imperfectly mobile and heterogeneous. Relational behaviors used to manage supply chains include cooperation, competition, conflict, trust, opportunism and other intangible behaviors.

Relational Cooperation, Competition and Opportunism: The role of relational constructs such as cooperation, competition and opportunism has a long, robust history in the social sciences, economics and business. John Wanamaker, a businessperson, (1890) was one of the first scholars to advocate transitioning from a transactional to a relational approach to understanding economic behavior. He indicated a viable relationship must respect mutuality, i.e., both partners benefit from exchanges that were both satisfying and profitable (Appel 1911, 48). May and Doob (1937) compiled more than thirty years of research supporting cooperation and competition as relational behavioral constructs

explaining social and economic behavior. Margerate Mead, an anthropologist, found cooperation and competition behaviors to characterize all primitive societies. Alderson (1965) described business as a behavioral system. He called for a Theory of Cooperation, a behavior he considered as important as NCT's Theory of Competition. The key point is there has been a long history that treats both cooperation and competition as endogenous behaviors. The social sciences, particularly psychology, evolutionary biology and sociology recognized cooperation and competition as dominant endogenous behaviors explaining and controlling human behavior.

In particular, evolutionary biology's emotional algorithms literature treats individual and group emotions as embedded, repeated proclivities that guide human behaviors and direct humans to cooperate or compete (Loch, C. H., Galunic, D. C., & Schneider, S., 2006). Although independent, these emotions systematically balance individual and group endogenous behaviors both cooperative and competitive. These emotions are cross-cultural, i.e., universal among cultures (Loch et al, 2006).

As these literatures attest, cooperation and competition are the two most prominent human behavioral resources. They dictate and explain human behavior, including the management of the international global supply chain. For instance, Constantin and Lusch (1994) amplified the importance of relational resources in business by classifying them as operant or operand. Operant resources are resources that produce effects themselves or in interaction with operand and/or other operant resources. In contrast, operand resources produce effects only when acted upon by some relevant operant resource. As such, they have limited value for competitive advantage.

Operant resources are intangible assets with skills and knowledge-based resources most important and fundamental to exchange (Vargo & Lusch 2008; Gronroos & Voima 2013). As such, they are a critical component of competitive advantage (Richey Jr, R. G., Roath, A. S., Whipple, J. M., & Fawcett, S. E., 2010). Heterogeneity and imperfect mobility characteristics enhance their value to create competitive advantage and to increase their durability relative to tangible assets (Barney 1991; Rungtusanatham, M., Salvador, F., Forza, C., & Choi, T. Y. 2003). By combining operant resources, higher order resource sets are created that can enhance competitive advantage as well as contribute to the firm's efficient and effective production of valued market offerings. Madhavaram and Hunt (2008) provide a more detailed explanation of the effects of Operant Resources in their Hierarchy of Operant Resources in which they classify operant resources as Basic, Composite, Interconnected and Masterful. Given this literature review, endogenous cooperation and endogenous competition are clearly operant resources.

Cooperation, competition and opportunism are relational constructs that occur within a context. Cooperation is affiliated in context with collaboration. Traditional models of supply chain management refer to collaboration as the primary management objective and strategy used to achieve superior financial performance (Ford & Hakansson 2013; Villena, V. H., Revilla, E., & Choi, T. Y., 2011).

In recent years, the collaboration bias has been somewhat mitigated by the concept of co-opetition. Co-opetition is defined as the simultaneous pursuit of endogenous cooperation and exogenous competition between two firms. While Brandenburger and Nalebuff (1996) first introduced cooperation and competition as behavioral strategies applied in a game theory context, more recent scholars have chosen the former context (Bengtsson & Kock 2014; Raza-Ullah, T., Bengtsson, M., & Kock, S., 2014). Further, Raza-Ullah (2014) considered co-opetition as a paradox, that is, an either/or framework of two opposite, but mutually independent constructs working simultaneously (Chen 2008). Cameron and Quinn (1988) described the paradox as a situation in which it is not possible to choose between contradictory dualities. Finally, Lewis (2000) held it was illogical for these contradictory logics to apply simultaneously, particularly when juxtaposed.

Despite the above, the most damning critique of co-opetition is its reliance on NCT. It treats competition as an exogenous construct, not an endogenous relational behavior. Further, Co-opetition as an exogenous construct and its paradox issues has not been found to improve on the satisfaction of partner's performance expectations (Padula & Batista Dagnino 2005).

Similar conceptual issues apply to the concept of opportunism. Primarily due to Williamson' characterization of opportunism as "self-interest with guile," the concept has been presented as the "dark side" of business relationships (Hawkins, T. G., Pohlen, T. L., & Prybutok, V. R., 2013;

Williamson 1975). As presented, "dark side" opportunism characterizes relationships whether they are individual, dyadic or network related (Ford & Hakansson 2013). Conceptually, opportunism has become mainstream research, but seldom studied as empirical research. Most research is associated Williamson's Transaction Cost Theory where opportunism is presumed to be present between exchange partners. Despite negative finding, the extant literature supports opportunism being a relational resource common to exchange relationships. Despite the dark side emphasis, certain authors argue opportunism is not necessary pejorative (Jap, S. D., Robertson, D. C., Rindfleisch, A., & Hamilton, R. 2013).

3. DISCUSSION

The Status of Relational Cooperation, Competition and Opportunism and Resource Advantage Theory
This paper suggests the existing theories of competition including R-A Theory applied to the marketing discipline as a general theory of competition is an inadequate foundation upon which to develop a general theory of marketing. R-A Theory fails to recognize its own premise that a firm's resources are relational. By continuing the notion that competition is solely an exogenous, structural construct, the theory omits the extensive literature supporting competition is predominately a behavioral construct, an alternative to a cooperation which the theory recognizes an endogenous, behavioral construct. By ignoring the extensive literature that establishes cooperation and competition as being characteristic of human behavior and decision-making, R-A Theory has relinquished its understanding of human decision-making and sociological development. As such, R-A Theory lacks an understanding of the human decision making process in life, marketing and business to be a foundation for a general theory of marketing.

Despite this critical shortcoming, R-A Theory has the necessary foundation to accommodate and enhance the role of endogenous competition as a relational component of its mix of firm resources. By incorporating endogenous behavioral competition as comparable alternative resource behavior to cooperation, R-A Theory becomes consistent with the social science treatment of cooperation and competition as alternative behavioral constructs, an essential tenet to qualify as a possible general theory of marketing.

With respect to opportunism, the behavior is overtly linked to change in one's environment including uncertainty, competitive intensity and turbulence (Mysen, T., Svensson, G., & Payan, J. M., 2011). Opportunism is a behavior that is most sensitive to change in the environment. To be applicable in marketing business and R-ATheory, opportunism must be consistent with the concepts of constrained self-interest, relational resources and asymmetry. Alderson (1965) and Hunt (2010) recognized that these environmental conditions might benefit a firm with competitive advantage sufficient to induce opportunistic behavior, but that not need to happen. A clear understanding of the situation and a constrained self-interest can preclude opportunism detrimental to a viable relationship.

Opportunism is a relational construct commonly found in life and business. It is one of the many firm's intangible assets and relational resources that can enhance its comparative advantage in resources. The construct is multidimensional with at least two dimensions: self-interest with guile and self-interest without guile. Opportunism is normally associated with a context, i.e., opportunity, a positive event that may merit attention. While self-interest with guile can occur, self-interest without guile most likely dominates. Hence, as explained, opportunism, subject to constrained self-interest can be a valuable relational resource for the firm (Hunt 2010).

4. CONCLUSION

Conceptually R-A Theory can be modified to accommodate the concept of relational competition as a valuable firm relational resource. Conceptually, a general theory of marketing is rooted in the understanding and application of the basic human behaviors behind managerial and consumer decision-making processes. R-A Theories commitment to the Theory of Structural, Exogenous Market-based Competition, precludes an adequate understanding of relational endogenous competition. The theory is based on cooperation as an endogenous behavioral construct, considered to be a relational resource. However, contrary to the concept of behavior competition, the alternative emotional algorithm to cooperation compromised R-A Theory's ability to explain decision-making behavior

applicable to life, business and marketing decisions. Hence, unless this modification is recognized and incorporated into the theory, R-A Theory remains a derivative of Neoclassical Theory.

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CSR Strategic Orientation in Chinese Companies: During Time of Transition to Global Marketplace

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Extended abstract

In China, corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a business concept continues to develop as the country tackles greater liberalization and globalization of the market (Wong, 2009). In the 21st century, greater interests of CSR practices in China evolve with the increase of publicly listed companies, foreign ownership, and foreign trade. Global brands experience pressure from consumers and regulatory agencies to validate ethical sources of products from China, prompting a need for Chinese companies to demonstrate a commitment to CSR. In 2006, the Chinese Communist Party introduced policies that address social, economic, and environmental challenges coined Harmonious Society and expected to raise awareness of CSR among Chinese companies and promote responsible practices.

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of CSR in China by combining a manager's description of CSR in his or her own language with quantitative survey responses of questions on the organization's managerial practices and market. This is the first empirical survey research that investigates the CSR strategic orientation of Chinese companies and significant antecedents that influence firms' choices. Data derives from a sample of a national survey by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) collected in in twelve cities in China. The data for this study includes responses in 2005-2006 to explore managerial mindsets during a milestone transition period for CSR in China. The government's Harmonious Society policy was set in the 2005 National People's Congress and legislated in a 2006 amendment to the Chinese Company Law requiring companies to undertake social responsibility when conducting business (Lin, 2010).

CSR is a distinct concept in North America and Western Europe, whereas in many Asian cultures the traditions of business responsibility are not included in publicized corporate strategies and written

operating procedures and measures. As nations become globally integrated, CSR practices based on societal obligations are transforming into explicit and strategic corporate-level initiatives to meet social responsibilities (Moon & Shen, 2010). Fransen (2013) calls for scholars to consider how national institutions (such as civil society pressures, development policy, and MNC presence) relate to distinct aspects of CSR practices.

1. RESEARCH DESIGN

The objective of this study is to identify the CSR orientations of companies in China and explore the factors that influence those orientations in the early years of national CSR focus. Chabowski, Mena, and Gonzalez-Padron (2011) propose that an external focus, environmental emphasis, and ethical intent would have the strongest influence on firm performance and would warrant company attention. However, the political and cultural climate of China may influence Chinese companies' focus on each dimension (Chapple & Moon, 2005). Therefore, our first research question explores what businesses consider the primary dimensions of CSR in China. The second research question seeks to understand how organizational factors and firm characteristics predict a firm's choice of CSR orientation.

The sample for this study comes from a CSR survey from the International Finance Corporation (IFC). The data from 2005 includes 1,268 firms from 12 cities in China representing three geographic regions of China: coastal, central, and western. In total, 625 respondents answered the questions relevant to this study. The final analysis includes 602 firms after screening for missing data issues.

The measure for CSR orientation is a content analysis of statements provided by survey respondents instructed to list five key dimensions that a company should focus on to build corporate social responsibility. Coding relates to the framework describing the stakeholder, sustainability, and obligation perspectives of CSR developed in Chabowski et. al (2011). The three components include: 1) stakeholder focus (internal, external), 2) area of emphasis (social, environmental) and 3) intent (legal, ethical, discretionary). The total focus-emphasis-intent combinations increase to twenty-four when including the economic emphasis from sustainability (Elkington, 1998) and the economic intent from Carroll's (1979) classification of CSR obligations.

Five organizational factors that may influence CSR are available in the IFC survey: Corporate Value System, Management and Employee Education, Board Effectiveness, publicly listed and Political Connection. The six firm-level factors in the study are firm size, ownership, location, market competition, and industry. Logit regression assesses the influence of organizational factors and firm characteristics on CSR orientation.

2. FINDINGS

The first dimension is the focus relating to external stakeholders such as the government and community, and internal stakeholders of the firm such as employees, customers, suppliers, and shareholders. The companies in the sample have a balanced focus on external and internal stakeholders, with 74% referencing both classifications of stakeholders in their description of CSR.

The second dimension relates to the area of emphasis, whether economic, environmental, or social. Results show a greater emphasis on social issues, such as benefiting society, protecting and caring for external and internal stakeholder groups, and honesty. Over 97% of the firms include social dimensions in their description of CSR, while only 64% include environmental topics and 67% include economic. The emphasis on social topics is the dominant theme for companies in China. The top four CSR orientations include a social area of emphasis (internal-social-ethical, external-social-ethical-external-social-philanthropic, and internal-social-legal), and two more orientations are in the top ten with more than 170 companies (external-social-economic and external-social-legal).

The third dimension of intent relates to obligation to meet economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic expectations that society has of an organization. Legal responsibilities receive the greatest attention (87%), and over 78% of the companies mention ethical responsibilities, including the top two CSR orientations (internal-social-ethical) and (external-social-ethical). Tying the ethical intention to a social area of emphasis suggests that more companies recognize CSR activities that are above the law and promoting good citizenship. Philanthropic obligation receives the least amount of attention, with only 46% of the firms mention donations and care for vulnerable populations or social assistance (external-social-philanthropic). Supporting lower attention to philanthropic responsibilities makes sense for the Chinese market, which expect the government to address social issues.

The second research question relates to the organizational factors and firm characteristics that contribute to the degree of attention on CSR orientations. The study unveils that a corporate value system and management's higher education provides greater attention to the economic obligations of an environmental emphasis by conserving energy and resources. The study supports prior research on ownership, with state-owned firms having a greater emphasis on those orientations focusing on social welfare or benefiting society than other ownership structures.

3. CONCLUSION

This study encourages managers to consider CSR strategies from more than one perspective of the role of business. A multidimensional view considers a stakeholder view, the triple bottom line of sustainability, and social responsibilities that include economic aspects of CSR. This approach recognizes that CSR is more than altruistic or charitable practices. A strategic approach to CSR creates customer value and superior returns for the firm. The real synergy of CSR occurs when the dimensions of sustainability and social responsibilities interact to create value for internal and external stakeholders.

The cross-sectional data captures the milestone period of CSR practices in China; however, it does not reflect the dynamics of the CSR movement over time. Future research can collect more data from recent years to study the changes with CSR strategic orientation using a longitudinal approach. CSR progress has been slow since the establishment of the Harmonious Society policy in 2006. We predict that the landscape changes of CSR in China would be incremental, rather than breakthrough, unless there is another major relevant policy developed and enforced by the central government.

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Toward a Diagnostic Approach to Assuring the Health of Complex Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

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Abstract

Entrepreneurial Ecosystem (EE) is a complex dynamic system whose participants need to have but are currently lacking good metrics and measurements of their outputs that reflect their contribution to the overall health of the system. We are proposing a preliminary model of such a complex ecosystem.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial ecosystem, entrepreneurial support organizations, entrepreneurship

1. ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS

The importance of, and subsequent interest to successfully growing entrepreneurial business cannot be overstated. There are 32.5 million small businesses in the US, which account for 99.9% percent of all US businesses and provide a lion share of employment (Census, 2021; SBA, 2021). For a nation to achieve competitiveness, policymakers across the globe believe that a strong entrepreneurial class is needed (Soto-Rodriguez, 2015).

In response to both, the demand from the entrepreneurs for supporting services and the recognition of the importance of entrepreneurial business to the local economy and community, a whole network of different organizations and agents arose. The recognition that entrepreneurial success does not simply appear in a vacuum, the idea of Entrepreneurial Ecosystem (EE) as a framework for understanding the broader context within which entrepreneurship occurs have been developed. EE is understood essentially as that "where individuals discover, evaluate and exploit opportunities for creating new goods and services" (Lux, Flávio, & Brown, 2020). EEs consist of interconnected entrepreneurial actors, organizations, institutions, processes and personal attributes, which "formally and informally coalesce to connect, mediate and govern the performance within the local entrepreneurial environment" (Mason & Brown, 2013, p. 5) and can defined as "a set of inter-related actors and components, within a geographic region, that enable productive entrepreneurship." These ecosystems are a combination of a region's social, political, economic, and cultural elements that work together to support various types of entrepreneurship (Spigel, 2017).

Such ecosystems are dynamic and complex. A rather apt metaphor here is that of a tropical rainforest (S.C. Betts, personal communication, 2022). "The tropical rainforest is the most complex ecosystem in the world as it consists of a large number of plant and animal species that vary among each other. They are biodiversity hotspots due to the presence of the suitable environmental conditions for the growth of a large number of primary producers." (Vedantu, 2022).

2. ASSESSING THE OUTPUT OF AN ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM

The health and success of such a complex ecosystem is a rather multifaceted issue and the contribution of every particular agent in it is difficult to measure.

Yet, it is important for many of the participants of such EEs to be measuring the impact of their activities and programs, to be able to have some metrics of success, including some early indicators that could inform them of whether what they are doing is working. Among other things, there are often donors and sponsors involved. Obviously, developing such a measurement system depends on the objectives of the agency and becomes an especially daunting task when the objectives are connected to long-term well being and prosperity of the state, city, county, etc. and its residents, or to continue with the metaphor – those that reflect the health of the whole system.

The difficulty in gauging the EE output is a major concern in its research. Directly measuring the output of EEs was declared as not possible because of varying entrepreneurial activity (Bruns et al., 2017). Additionally, it can take 20 years or more to generate a measurable impact, and most EEs are relatively young, making it difficult to measure their performance (Isenberg, 2010), not to mention the disruption that COVID-19 created in this sphere. Objective measures are troubling because they assume comparability across EEs, and they do not control for differences between them or situational constraints, raising methodological and measurement issues.

Furthermore, because it is impossible to replicate the characteristics of an EE, it appears important to identify their critical elements, components, or stakeholders (Subrahmanya, 2017). The success of an EE depends on relationships among these ESOs (Miller & Acs, 2017), making it crucial that researchers and policy-makers understand these connections and interactions (Harper-Anderson, 2018; Motoyama & Watkins, 2014). Yet, little is known about the connections between the key elements (ESOs) of an EE (Harper-Anderson, 2018; Motoyama & Watkins, 2014). Systemic conditions are the key to the success of an EE; but, to understand the causes of success better, an improved understanding of these conditions is needed (Stam, 2015).

It stands to reason that a system of useful measures and metrics should be grounded in a model of interactions of the key elements, an approach that considers the whole rainforest, to continue with the metaphor.
   Such a model will combine
- the agencies with their goals, clients, measures, services
- the small businesses/entrepreneurs with specific problems, point in the development cycle, goals, reason to exist, products/services, measures, other characteristics
- society with its needs and measures.
- other stakeholders such as the local community, employees, etc.

Several types of measures will reflect the functioning of the system: process measures, outcome measures, measure of current state and future goals. As new social and other priorities arise, such a system should be able to provide updated information on the functioning of the system vis-à-vis the updated goals.

3. FUTURE RESEARCH

This work is the first step towards an overall model of health of a complex EE and a system of metrics and measurements for its participants. A model of health for an EE may help policymakers to better understand how to assess the health of these ecosystems.

EEs are viewed as a crucial tool for creating strong economies (Spigel, 2017); therefore, it is crucial that we develop a better understanding of these dynamic and complex systems.

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The Effect of Social Identity Theory on Outcomes for Independent Sales Representatives

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Abstract

This paper explores how Social Identity Theory (SIT) predicts outcomes for direct selling microentrepreneurs by analyzing data from the 2018 *Direct Selling Association Salesforce Survey.* The secondary data analysis uses proxy variables to measure the cognitive, evaluative, emotional, and behavioral components of SIT, which are used to predict the independent sales representatives' likeliness to recommend and continue with the organization. Hierarchical regressions show that evaluative and behavioral indicators were more important predictors than the cognitive and emotional indicators. Direct selling organizations can use these results in identifying the key dimensions that lead to salesforce success and how to enhance these dimensions.

Keywords: salesforce performance, direct selling, social identity theory, microentrepreneurs

1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between company salespeople and the brands they work for has also been studied from several different sociological and psychological perspectives. However, this relationship is not well-understood for independent sales representatives who are microentrepreneurs that market company branded products to customers but are not company employees. These microentrepreneurs decide what to sell, when, and how much time and energy to devote to products, sales, and growth. Understanding the motivations of such salespeople is particularly important to direct selling

organizations (DSOs) which rely on a salesforce of independent representatives for revenue generation and salesforce recruitment.

A primary focus for DSOs is how the sales representative integrates into the larger group, in this case, the direct selling organization. Social identity may be particularly important where there is no employer-employee relationship and independent representatives recruit and profit from sales made by their teams. Thus, how the representative experiences and understands the way the organization and the sponsor facilitate a feeling of belongingness and integration may be particularly significant to direct selling microentrepreneurs' brand affiliation and success.

Social identity theory (SIT), introduced by Tajfel and Turner (1986), as expanded upon and cited in Gammoh, Mallin, and Pullins (2014) has four components relevant to direct selling and the data included in the *2018 Direct Selling Salesforce Survey:*

1. Cognitive Component – a cognitive awareness of one's membership in a social group-self categorization
2. Evaluative Component – a positive or negative value connotation attached to this group membership – group self-esteem
3. Emotional Component – a sense of emotional involvement with the group – affective commitment
4. Behavioral Component – behavioral tendencies in support of the group

SIT has been used as a guide to study more company-employed salesperson identification with the brand and company (Gammoh et al., 2014). Gammoh et al. found that the better the match between salesperson's values and the values of the brands and companies they work for, the more salespeople identified with the brand and company. This led to salespeople having higher job satisfaction and job commitment, as well as having better behavioral (clearer communication) and outcome (higher overall sales) performance. To our knowledge no research has been conducted to study SIT in relation to direct selling microentrepreneurs.

This paper aims to fill a gap in the literature by exploring the cognitive, evaluative, emotional, and behavioral components of social identity as they relate to direct selling microentrepreneurs with respect to recruiting and continuation behavior using a secondary data set. Table 1 identifies items in the *2018 Direct Selling Salesforce Survey* (DSSS) that constitute proxy measures of each of the four components of social identity. Figure 1 presents the overall model to be tested in hierarchical regressions to explore if the proxy SIT variables significantly predict outcomes.
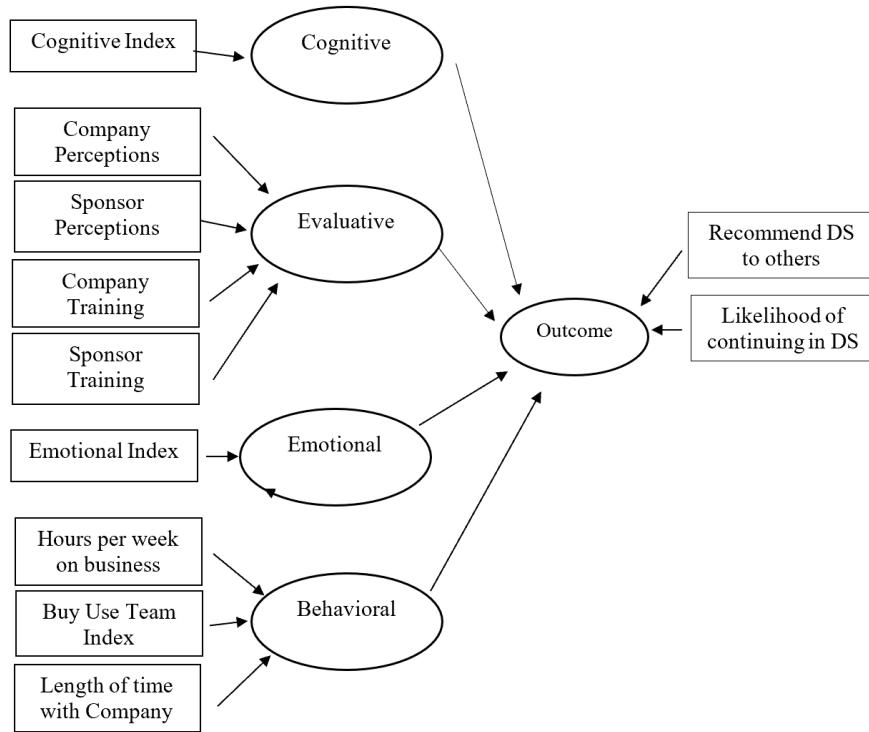
Figure 1: Integration of DSSS variables, SIT components, and Outcomes for Model Testing

Table 1: DSA Survey Variables Relative to Social Identity Theory

SIT Component	Items from the *Direct Selling Salesforce Survey*	New variables created for regression analyses
Cognitive Component	Reasons why I continue to be an independent seller Direct selling is a career for me. Short-term supplemental income. Long-term supplemental income. I get the products at a discount. The harder I work, the more I can make. I get recognition for my accomplishments. I want to be my own boss.	Cognitive index Summated single item, ranging from 0 (none of the reasons selected) to 7 (all reasons selected)
Evaluative Component	Rate your agreement with the following statements about your **company** and then again about your **sponsor** or upline from 1 (Don't agree at all) to 5 (Agree completely). Is interested in your personal development. Values you. Allows you to make your own business decisions freely Has provided the means for you to develop more friendships. Has recognized your accomplishments appropriately Helps you to set and achieve challenging goals Has provided you with the chance to be more involved in your community. Is honest and accurate about the effort required in direct selling and the rewards you can expect to receive. Educates you about avoiding sales practices that are deceptive, unlawful or unethical. Is very clear about the full costs of your orders, including any shipping and service charges. Requires or encourages you to purchase only a reasonable amount of inventory. Is good at anticipating the needs of independent direct sellers. Provides an appropriate amount of training tools and information for you to succeed. *Company only items* Provides an easy-to-use ordering system. Gives you a way to earn a fair return on your time and effort. Makes you welcome in a new country or location. Has competent corporate personnel that work with you. Has materials that are truthful in describing product quality, value and performance. Will buy back your unexpired or undamaged inventory if you request it. Will buy back product inventory, sales aids and materials, including the starter kit, if you decide to leave the business.	Company perceptions index Averaged single item of all 20 items, ranging from 1 to 5 Sponsor perceptions index Averaged single item of 13 items, ranging from 1 to 5
	Rate your company on the training and support it provides overall. Response options range from 1 (low quality) to 5 (high quality). Rate your upline/sponsor on the training and support	Company evaluation Single item indicator, ranging from 1 to 5

	he/she provides overall. Response options range from 1 (low quality) to 5 (high quality).	Sponsor evaluation Single item indicator, ranging from 1 to 5
Emotional Component	Reasons why I continue to be an independent seller (check all that apply) I like to tell people about the product. To meet new people/expand my social circle. To be part of a supportive team.	Emotional index Summated item, ranging from 0 (no reasons selected) to 3 (all reasons selected)
Behavioral Component	How many hours per week do you spend/spent on your direct selling business? 1 (Less than 1 hour per week), 2 (between 1-9 hours per week), 3 (Between 10-29 hours per week), 4 (30 or more hours per week). I am an independent representative for my company, and… (check all that apply) I have purchased my company's products in the last 12 months. I have used products in the last 12 months. I have developed a sales team of my own. How long have you represented your company? 1 (Less than 6 months), 2(6 months to less than one year), 3 (1 year to less than 2 years), 4 (2 years to less than 3 years), 5 (3 to 5 years, 6 (6 to 10 years), to 7 (Over 10 years)	Behavior WorkHrsWk higher numbers meaning more hours Behavior Company Summated single item, ranging from 0 (did not purchase, use, or develop) to 3 (all behaviors) Behavior Length of Time Single item
Performance Behaviors	Based on your experience as a DS representative, how likely are you to recommend that a friend or family member become a DS sales representative? Response options range from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 10 (extremely likely). How likely are you to continue representing the company for the next year? 1 (Very unlikely) to 4 (Very Likely)	Outcome Combined Recommend and Likelihood to Continue, ranging from 1 to 14

2. METHOD

This study uses a proprietary data set from the *Direct Selling Salesforce Survey* conducted by the Direct Selling Association (DSA) in 2018. DSA member companies sent online survey invitations to a random sample of current independent sales representatives. Participants self-identified as a current or former independent direct sales representative. A total of 8,305 current independent sales representatives and 409 former representatives responded. The full survey explores demographic and psychographic variables across the independent representative lifestyle stages: enrollment, selling, recruiting/sponsoring, engagement/retention, and exit from direct selling (if applicable). While the survey was not designed explicitly to test the relationships between Social Identity Theory and direct selling entrepreneurs' performance, there are multiple variables which support analysis.

Based on the choice of proxy variables to represent the SIT components in Figure 1 and Table 1, several new variables are created for use in model testing. For the cognitive component, seven items in the DSSS are identified as indicators, related to reasons that the respondent is an independent sales representative. The seven yes-no items are combined into a single summated index, ranging from 0 (none of the reasons are selected) to 7 (all the reasons are selected). To represent the evaluative component of the SIT, four indicators are created. The first two, Company Perceptions Index and Sponsor Perceptions Index, are calculated by averaging agreement ratings, ranging from 1 (Don't agree at all) to 5 (Agree Completely) to a set of items (20 for company perceptions; 13 for sponsor perceptions). The other two indicators of the evaluative component are single item indicators,

rating the company (and the sponsor) on the training and support they provide, ranging from 1 (low quality) to 5 (high quality).

The emotional component of the SIT is represented by respondents' yes-no response to three items reflecting their reasons of being an independent sales representative. This summated index ranges from 0 (none of the reasons selected) to 3 (all the reasons selected). The behavioral component of the SIT is represented by three measures in the DSSS. The first is a categorical number of hours per week spent on the direct selling business, measured on a 1 to 4 scale, with higher numbers meaning more hours. The respondent's behavior toward the company is indicated by their response to 3 yes-no items reflecting whether the representative had purchased the company's products in the last year, used the company's products in the last year, and developed a sales team of their own. A summated item is created, ranging from 0 (did not engage in any company behaviors listed) to 3 (engaged in all the company behaviors). The length of time that the respondent had represented the company is measured with a single item ranging from 1 to 7, with higher numbers reflecting more years with the company.

The dependent variable used in the regression is a combined summated index, from the likelihood to recommend becoming an independent sales representative to a friend or family member and the likelihood to continue representing the company for the next year. The combined index ranges from 1 to 14 with higher numbers reflecting higher likelihood.

3. RESULTS

Full data for all proxy variables predicting recommending and continuing with the DSO is available for 2252 respondents. Table 2 presents the four steps of the hierarchical regression predicting the combined recommendation and continuation outcome variable. In each successive step of the regression, the addition of another SIT construct significantly improves the model (each model $F > 203.1$, all ps < .001). Each SIT component is significant in improving the previous model (all Fchange values > 5.87, all ps < .05). The final model, in which all SIT components are simultaneously entered into the regression, explains 45% of the variance in the outcome variable (F (9,2251) = 203.11, $p <$ .001). Exploring the proxy variables individually in the final model, all social identity variables are significant predictors of recommending and continuing with the company, except sponsor perceptions, sponsor training, and length of time working for the company (all ts > 2.44, all ps < .02). The last column of Table 2 shows the standardized beta values and indicates that the most important predictor of recommending and continuing with the DSO is company perceptions (β = .420), followed by hours worked per week (β = .112), company training (β = .109), and buy-use-team index (β = .107). All significant predictors are positive: as they increase, the outcome improves.

Table 2: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for SIT Variables Predicting Direct Selling Recommend and Likelihood to Continue Outcome (n = 2252)

Variable	R^2	F	ΔR^2	Fchange	B	SE B	β
Model 1	.13	343.75**					
Cognitive Index					.447	.024	
							.364**
Model 2	.42	324.86**	.287	277.84**			
Cognitive Index					.195	.021	.159**
Company Perceptions					1.58	.108	.462**
Sponsor Perceptions					-.004	.089	-.001
Company Training					.359	.083	.119**
Sponsor Training					0.50	.067	.022
Model 3	.421	272.31**	.002	5.97*			

	R^2	F	ΔR^2	ΔF	B	$SE\ B$	β
Cognitive Index					.153	.027	.124**
Company Perceptions					1.58	.108	.459**
Sponsor Perceptions					-.012	.089	-.005
Company Training					.348	.083	.115**
Sponsor Training					0.52	.067	.023
Emotional Index					.121	.050	.054*
Model 4	.45	203.11**	.028	37.87**			
Cognitive Index					.080	.028	.065**
Company Perceptions					1.44	.106	.420**
Sponsor Perceptions					-.025	.087	-.009
Company Training					.330	.081	.109**
Sponsor Training					0.81	.065	.036
Emotional Index					.153	.049	.069**
Hours Worked Per Wk					.346	.053	.112**
Buy Use Team Index					.552	.093	.107**
Length of Time with Company					.019	.022	.014

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$

4. DISCUSSION

The research demonstrates that Social Identity Theory is important in direct selling; independent sales representatives with stronger social identification with the direct selling organization have more positive outcomes, including likelihood of recommending direct selling to others and to continue in the direct selling channel, and yearly net sales from direct selling. These findings are consistent with the findings of Gammoh et al (2014) for company-employed salespersons. This is the first study to demonstrate such a relationship with a salesforce comprised of independent, self-employed sales representatives.

The most important predictors of the likelihood to recommend direct selling to others and continue direct selling outcome are indicators from the evaluative component of SIT. If a company is more interested in predicting whether a seller will recommend the company and continue with the company, then the DSO should make sure to effectively communicate the company's commitment to the representative (see the 20 items comprising company perceptions in Table 1). DSOs should encourage their independent sellers to increase the hours they work per week and encourage the representative to purchase and use the company products and create a sales team; statistical results from this research could be used to illustrate the importance of these SIT behaviors. Company training perceptions are also important in predicting recommendations and continuing with the organization. Sponsor/upline perceptions and training do not predict recommending the company to others or continuing as a representative. This is an important finding for DSOs as they allocate efforts and financial resources within the channel. The length of time the direct seller is affiliated with the company does not predict recommending or continuing, suggesting DSOs recognize that while revenue generation is affected by longevity of the direct selling organization-direct selling representative relationship, other factors may not be.

This project analyzes secondary data collected by the Direct Selling Association in their *2018 Direct Selling Salesforce Survey*. The primary limitation is the measurement of the SIT constructs. In a secondary data analysis project, the researchers do not have control over the specific questions in the survey. The choice of proxy variables in the present study occurred post hoc. Other researchers may identify different variables to represent the SIT. Similarly, more items in the DSSS represent the evaluative and behavioral components than the cognitive and emotional components. Therefore, the regression results showing stronger effects on outcomes from evaluative and behavioral components

could be a statistical artifact, due to the larger variance in these measures. Future research could replicate the SIT measurement items in Gammoh et al. (2014) using an independent sales representative sample to allow for more direct comparison. These authors are currently working to replicate the instrument used by Gammoh et al. (2014) to assess the role of SIT in a smaller sample of direct selling microentrepreneurs.

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The Relationship between Parasocial Attachment to Podcast Hosts and Advertising Outcomes for Brands

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Abstract

Podcast listening has been consistently growing over the past 10 years, with 41% of Americans over 12 now describing themselves as monthly podcast listeners (Edison Research, 2021). In the midst of this growth, there has been relatively little academic marketing research addressing podcast advertising and what components increase its effectiveness for brands. Though there have been examinations of relationship perceptions between listeners and podcast hosts, there has yet to be work that measures such relationship factors and their influence on listener buyer behavior for products mentioned in podcast episodes. This work proposes a model and methodology to examine these relationships.

Keywords: Parasocial attachment, podcast advertising, advertising effectiveness, influencer marketing, influencer credibility

1. INTRODUCTION

Podcast Advertising

Podcasting is a revolutionary listening medium created in 2004 in response to the design of the Apple iPod which was first showcased to the world in 2001. The iPod enabled downloading of radio broadcast files that could then be consumed on the go. This was the first technology of its kind and paved the way for podcast creation. In 2014, a *This American Life*'s spinoff podcast premiered, called "*Serial*" which centered around a possible wrongful conviction in Baltimore. Presented in 12 weekly releases, the podcast left viewers with a cliffhanger question each week. This podcast is considered to be the tipping point in podcast listenership (Molloy, 2019). Podcasting has now grown to over 116 million monthly listeners in the United States alone with multiple platforms and audio apps such as Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Amazon Music and SiriusXM Radio competing for audio share (Edison Research, 2021; Skinner, 2020). According to Edison Research (2021), 78% of Americans over age 12 in the sample are at least familiar with the term "podcasting," 57% has listened to a podcast at least once, and 41% identify themselves as monthly podcast listeners. US weekly podcast listeners averaged 8 podcasts per week.

Podcast communities and their fandom hold immense untapped buying power for marketers. This work will explore the relationship podcast hosts, listener engagement and advertising have on consumer behavior. And why should we be paying attention? Because not only is the current advertising spend in the podcast arena a whopping $800 million annually, that number is expected to grow to $1.7 billion by 2024, citing projections by Forbes (Adgate, 2021). Podcast research from both

Nielsen and Edison show us podcast listening is not simply rising at an average rate, but the growth of listener base will double by 2023 (Nielsen Media, 2020). This tells us a story of the future. One where understanding consumer behavior in relation to podcast advertising, their hosts and listeners will provide break through understanding for brands and for our peers in marketing.

Podcast content creators can monetize their work in several ways: salary from subscription pay platforms, pay from brands that advertise within the podcast, and monetary support via Patreon.com, where a listener pays a monthly amount for additional content from the creator. Podcast advertising is a direct-to-consumer business model that according to Nielsen, leads 62% of listeners to contemplate purchasing the product (Kaufer, 2021). The advertising message can be shared in one of two ways, a pre-recorded message provided by the advertised company that is played during a pause in the podcast show, or a lightly scripted ad and testimonial of the product directly interjected by the Podcast host. Patreon income to the podcast creator is independent of the brands that are advertised within the podcast and relies on listener support. Not all podcasts have additional Patreon accounts, but those that do usually offer a tiered support structure, such that the more the "patron" pay for support each month, the more content, merchandise, or community benefits they receive from the creators. Graphtreon.com ranks Patreon creators relative to the number of monthly supporters it has. As of February 1, 2022, the podcast "True Crime Obsessed" has the largest Patreon support group with over 49,000 monthly supporters, yielding a minimum of $215,000 to the podcast each month [(followers * lowest tier of support $5)-maximum Patreon commission 12%].

What we do know: podcasting listening is on the rise, Patreon support for podcasts are providing millions in revenue generation to podcast hosts annually. The rise in use and popularity of both platforms show us podcasts have large followings of individuals that are willing to pay for higher levels of access to their favorite podcast hosts. This advanced access can be delivered in many ways: in-person events, private Patreon supporter groups, exclusive newsletters or bonus episodes and branded merchandise. While there have been studies on podcast listening habits, the study of parasocial attachment to podcast hosts and its relationship to consumer recall of and intentions towards brands mentioned in podcasts has not been published at this time.

As our media channels rapidly evolve, it is important we continue to explore those evolutions and their effect on consumer behavior. Podcasting is not simply an untapped topic in marketing research; it is a gold mine for advertisers. Results produced will help companies understand the depth as to which parasocial attachment and practical application of increasing parasocial attachment will impact the listener response to podcast ads. The work proposed here seeks to understand consumers' beliefs toward their favorite podcast host(s) and the relationship between those relationship perceptions to the consumption behavior of the advertisements played or presented within that podcast.

Parasocial Attachment

The difference between Podcast advertising and other traditional advertising mediums is assumed to be the level of listener trust and pseudorelationship with the Podcast host(s). An Edison Research's Super Listeners Study conducted in 2020 found that 45% of the respondents surveyed believed the products their favorite Podcast hosts advertised were used by those Podcast hosts (Edison Research 2020). This project will study the connection component of advertising within Podcasts, namely parasocial interaction (Giles 2002), and the effectiveness of Podcast hosts who act as influencers for a company brand. Parasocial interaction (PSI) is the interaction between a Podcast host, YouTuber, Celebrity, or social media influencer toward their audience to increase the audience's positive feelings of likeness or connection to that audience member.

We hypothesize that higher PSI between the listener and the podcast host(s) increases consumers' perceived credibility of the individual they are watching or listening to (Giles 2002). Elevated levels of credibility creates a life-like connection between the influencer and audience member, growing the social trust and feelings of connection. This credibility in turn leads to an enhanced positive attitude and purchase intentions towards brands promoted by those influencers. Figure 1 presents the model to be tested in the present study.

2. METHOD

The measures will be assessed in an online survey using Qualtrics software. The survey will begin with behavioral questions about the respondents' listening activities in relation to their favorite

podcasts, followed by questions about the listeners ability to recall ads heard on the podcast. We will then use a modified version of the PSI scale created by Bocarnea and Brown known as the "Celebrity-Persona Identification Scale" (Bocarnea & Brown, 2007) and questions from four subscales selected from the credibility scale introduced by Xiao, Wang and Chan-Olmsted (2018). The credibility subscales are trustworthiness, homophily, engagement and expertise.

The PSI and sub-scales questions will be presented in a Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from 1(strongly disagree) to a 5 (strongly agree). The end of the survey will measure recall, attitudes, and purchase intentions towards brands that have been endorsed by Podcasters. Participants will be recruited from multiple Facebook fan groups of high grossing podcasts and will be incentivized to complete the survey by the chance to win prizes (choice of gift cards or podcast-branded merchandise) in a random raffle after the survey is completed.

3. PROPOSED ANALYSES

The data will be analyzed using structural equation modeling software, PLS-SEM to test the model presented in Figure 1. All lettered paths are hypothesized to be positive and significant.
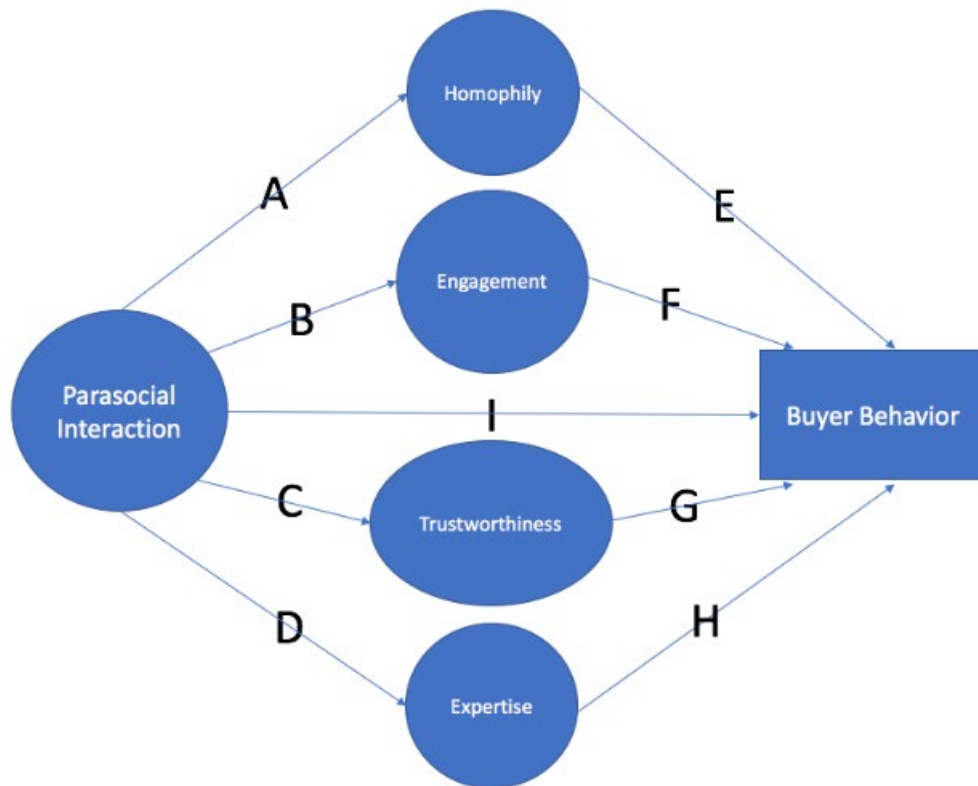
Figure 1: Parasocial Interaction as a predictor of credibility and buyer behavior.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of this survey will deliver valuable insight in understanding how parasocial attachment to podcasters, as well as the other social credibility factors, affect spending and purchase habits of this type of consumer. We will provide insight on the future landscape of podcasting, Patreon support of podcasting, and touch on the parallels of Patreon support and podcast fandom. Most importantly, we will understand how this information can be related and used in consumer marketing. Managerial implications for podcasters and brands will be included.

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The Gaps Services Model:
A Framework for Developing
Post-Pandemic Marketing Strategies

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1. GAPS AND POST-PANDEMIC MARKETING STRATEGIES

The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the way consumers behave and thus how business is conducted. Many of the business-related changes wrought by the pandemic fall under the purview of services marketing and have permanently changed the landscape of business—changes that will persist in a post-pandemic world. Thus, it would be useful to identify a framework that can be used to both provide a conceptual underpinning for these changes, and to develop successful marketing strategies for the pandemic and beyond. The author proposes that the Gaps Model of Service Quality (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1990) is one such model. Consequently, major pandemic related business problems are identified, the Gaps Model is briefly introduced, how provider gaps track to pandemic problems are illustrated, and examples of service marketing strategies for dealing with the pandemic related changes are presented.

Widespread pandemic related business problems include, but are not limited to, five major issues. First, consumers engaged in a major increase in online buying and panic buying, resulting in demand shifts and a reduction in inventory (Sons, 2022). Second, these demand shifts impacted supply chain issues (Alicke & Swan, 2021), such as cargo ships in port with no workers to offload cargo, nor truckers to transport goods to warehouses for domestic shipment. These difficulties are further complicated by a third problem (Padhi , 2022; Bhattacharjee et al., 2021; Hancock & Schaninger, 2022)—high employee attrition due to the pandemic, resulting in a lack of sufficient workers to provide goods and services. The combination of these issues led to a fourth issue—increased service failures, which were compounded by poor service recovery, poor customer communication, and poor customer satisfaction. Such subpar performance was further exacerbated by a fifth issue, the pandemic induced fraying of social networks due to consumer's isolation and lack of normal human interactions, leading to increased consumer anger (Lyall, 2022), culminating in airline flight disruptions, consumer disproportionate overreaction to service perceived as not meeting expectations, and incidents of rage with customer service agents and a wide variety of retail workers.

So, how might these pandemic problems be classified and addressed? One option is the Gaps Model of Service Quality (Gaps Model). The Gaps Model (Zeithaml et al., 1990; Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler 2018) states that creating and sustaining service quality results from closing the customer gap—the difference between the customer's expectations and perceptions for service quality. And closing the customer gap is accomplished by closing each of four provider gaps: 1) the listening gap; 2) the service design and standards gap; 3) the service performance gap; and 4) the communication gap.

Gap 1 (listening gap) is the difference between customer expectation of service and the company's understanding of those expectations (i.e., the firm doesn't have an accurate understanding of customer expectations). Many companies were so overwhelmed by the pandemic that they forgot to listen to their consumers' changing expectations and needs, resulting in poor customer perceptions of service and the widening of the customer gap. This listening gap (Gap 1) did and continues to result in customer frustration and dissatisfaction that has escalated to customers becoming enraged and acting out on employees.

Solutions require addressing one or more of the five service quality dimensions (Zeithaml et al., 2018, p. 88): reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. So, for the dimension of responsiveness, one strategy might be for employees to listen to customers patiently and calmly, allowing them to vent when they experience problems. And, then to promptly redress the issue of concern, such as refunding the purchase price when perishable goods were not delivered on time. Of course, this assumes that the customer can be calmed down, and the employee is not at risk, which would require a different type of intervention.

Gap 2 (service designs and standards gap) is the difference between company understanding of customer expectations and the development of customer-driven service designs and standards. For example, when grocery stores recognized that consumer demand for curbside pickup and home delivery had sharply increased due to the pandemic, because of fear of contracting COVID-19 and the need for social distancing, they either began to offer or to increase the level of these services and decrease the cost of said services to consumers.

Gap 3 (service performance gap) is the discrepancy between the development of customer-driven service standards and actual service performance by company employees. This gap was exacerbated by pandemic driven employee attrition, shifted demand, and supply chain issues. This resulted in a situation where demand exceeded capacity. One remedy that businesses can employ is shifting demand to off peak times. For example, at Christmas time, a company might offer to give free shipping to online orders or other financial incentives if the customer is willing to wait until January to have their merchandise shipped.

Gap 4 (communication gap) captures the difference between service delivery (actual) and the company's external communications (marketing promises). Supply chain issues and consumer panic buying conspired to widen this gap during the pandemic and this trend will likely continue post-pandemic as a result on ongoing supply chain issues. Such issues can result in overpromising via marketing communications and underdelivering to consumers, resulting in service failure.

So, in the previous example of an online company offering financial incentives to buyers in exchange for accepting delayed delivery to shift demand off peak, what if the delayed delivery deadline cannot now be met due to supply chain issues (e.g., product inventory that has been in port since October is still stuck at port with no way to transfer the product to the company's warehouse for shipping to consumers)? Now, a service failure has occurred, and service recovery should ensue. One way this might happen is by proactively notifying the affected consumers of the problem, apologizing, explaining why the problem is out of the company's control due to the pandemic, and then offering some complimentary item as a token of appreciation for the customer's patience. This item might be something of relatively small cost to the company; but valuable to the customer, such as free extended warranty on the product purchased.

In conclusion, while every possible shift in consumer behavior that might impact service quality and related marketing strategies cannot be identified in this paper, the Gaps Model provides a strong framework for categorizing both current and future pandemic-related shifts or changes in consumer behavior relating to services marketing. Further, the Gaps Model lends itself to identifying or developing marketing strategies for businesses to successfully adapt to these changes and continue to evolve as the post-pandemic world becomes the new paradigm for business.

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The Persuasive Process of Social Media News: An Adaptation of the Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion

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Abstract

This paper discusses how persuasion works amongst social media users when they are exposed to news content, and how this may affect behaviors in virtual communities resulting in larger social conducts such as *Blind Following* and *Cancel Culture*. The study consists of three online surveys distributed amongst randomized groups of social media users based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The findings suggest that there is a preference for the peripheral route, indicating lower levels of mental involvement and that more extreme social behaviors such as Blind Following and Cancel culture may be the result of a broken neural reward pathway.

Keywords: Social media, persuasion, ELM

1. INTRODUCTION

The focus of the research presented here, was to explain the different attitudes that social media users may have when coming across news content. To better explain this phenomenon, the Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion (ELM) from Petty & Cacioppo (1986), was used as the supporting theoretical framework. The ELM theory describes two different routes, central and peripheral, in which a message can influence the persuasion of an individual and result in attitude change.

The study consisted of three different online surveys administered to a total of 83 participants. Two randomized groups of 15 participants received evaluations that were specifically designed to compare social media preference when shown the peripheral route versus the central route described in ELM. A third survey was designed and administered to a different, randomized group of 53 participants. This last survey had a greater focus on the peripheral route concept and aimed at inquiring the depths of the blind following phenomenon.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) attempts to explain the different ways in which humans process stimuli, and the outcomes of these processes in changing attitudes and consequent behaviors. The ELM suggests two different routes through which individuals can be persuaded. The first route, called the central route, consists in messages that require high

cognitive processing from the receiver. The second route and the one that is of higher interest in this study, called peripheral route, is based on visual, sensory, and other cues which induces change without necessitating scrutiny of the true merits of the information presented, meaning that lower cognitive effort is required.

A simple cue in the persuasion context affects attitudes in the absence of argument processing (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). For persuasion to take place and to be able to influence an attitude when an individual is not engaged in higher levels of cognition, the presence of one or several peripheral cues is needed. One can present an incomprehensible message about a specific issue together with the potential cue and still be persuasive. The inferences and associations made between cues and actual information is commonly found in information shared through social media. There is an overwhelming presence of peripheral cues such as brief comments in a post, images, captions, number of likes and even the presence of people in the form of a virtual imprint of influencers and accounts.

Belief formation is an important step occurring following persuasion and attitude formation, that could potentially divert behavior in a person. Consequently, if shared by multiple individuals, belief can modify larger social structures. The process of believing is described as a physiological brain function that stabilizes a perception in the light of its value to a given subject (Seitz & Angel, 2020). Beliefs are found in the form of neural computations in the brain and are subject to restructuration if new, relevant and valuable information to the user is presented. These are discrete neural states which are related to concrete events and become linked to continuous neural states that reflect guidance of behavior (Seitz & Angel, 2020).

Social media users spend an average of 145 minutes per day using any kind of platform (Daily Social Media Usage, 2021) with an indication of exposure significantly increasing during the last years. The increase in interaction and engagement indicates a preference for such behavior. In the context of social media, every notification, whether it is a text message, a "like" on Instagram, or a Facebook notification, has the potential to be a positive social stimulus and dopamine influx (Haynes, 2018). McSweeney (2019) states that, just like a gambling or substance addiction, social media addiction involves broken reward pathways. Social media provides immediate rewards in the form of attention from the network.

3. MATERIALS AND METHOD

To better understand the impact of the different variables in users' behavior and the types of routes they take when coming across news content in social media, different activities in the format of a Google form were designed. The activities were distributed by sharing a URL to three randomized groups of individuals with a result of 83 participants for the overall study.
Data collection consisted of three Google forms under the name of Survey 1A, Survey 1B and Main Evaluation. Survey 1A and 1B were created with the intention of determining which route (central or peripheral) was intrinsically preferred by the study subjects. Whereas the Main Evaluation was designed to obtain information regarding blind following, source preference and influencer presence in individuals taking the peripheral route.

The Main Survey was designed to support or reject the hypothesis of a possible correlation between the peripheral route and the blind following phenomenon. It also attempted to address the issue of a message being discarded by users when the source of information is known. The survey starts by presenting general background information, followed by the presentation of the known sources and influencers. Once the study subjects were finished synthesizing the information, they were asked to indicate which post they preferred better based on the information presented and their personal preference. Each post conveyed information about one of two arguments specifically created for this survey. Argument 1 aimed to persuade individuals by providing ambiguous information based on cohesion but not necessarily coherence. Whereas argument 2 attempted to persuade individuals by providing a more informative content based on coherence and cohesion.

4. FINDINGS

The first set of results was based on the responses obtained from survey 1A and 1B. The main objective of this analysis is to explain the hypothesis of the intrinsic nature of social media users to

navigate the peripheral route in comparison to the central route when presented with informational content.

Influencing factors & elaboration
A topic that was almost unknown to participants was selected to avoid as many biased responses as possible. Data collected indicates that the overall emotional state of participants while taking the survey was 52.6% positive with feeling 'wonderful' and 'relaxed' as their most typical response, whereas 47% of participants claimed to be 'tired' or 'stressed'. It is possible to discard emotional state as a factor that could drastically influence users' responses in this scenario.

After the main social media post was displayed, users were asked whether to continue to a different post or read more about the topic. Only 34.3% of the participants claimed to be interested in reading more and were then taken to a more extensive informational section. In terms of ELM, this is an indicator of the willingness of participants to engage in higher cognitive involvement tasks. In contrast, 65.7% of participants opted to continue to the next available post indicating a lower level of cognitive involvement characteristic of the peripheral route.

Social Media Preference
Data obtained from both survey 1A and 1B indicate that 82.85% of individuals actively used Facebook and 76.2% actively used YouTube. These results coincided with the large portion of Americans that rely on both platforms to access news content with 36% and 23% respectively (Shearer & Mitchel, 2021). According to the responses collected, the top three characteristics that a social media user seeks in a post are comments with 59% of the votes, followed by reactions with 13.8% and reading time with 13.5%.

Content Feedback to Determine Route Preference
To better determine the specific route users where taking, they were asked to rate the content in terms of quality, interest, length, and satisfaction. The first set of results indicated how interesting and informative the content was to users in both the central and the peripheral routes. In the central and peripheral surveys, participants rated the content as 'Informative' with an 85.7% and an 86.6 % respectively. Survey takers in the central route also rated the content as 'Boring' with a 71.4%, whereas in the peripheral route the highest percentage corresponded to 'Interesting' with a 66.6%. The central route survey was also described as 57.1% extensive and 64.4 % unsatisfying. On the other hand, participants showed to be more comfortable taking this route and 46.7% indicated the information amount was just right and 93.4% claimed it was satisfying. In addition, 42.8% of the participants described the survey with negative connotations, whereas 46.6% described the peripheral survey with positive connotations. Lastly, another indicator of the lack of willingness to engage in high cognitive elaboration tasks was that 61.9% of participants for both surveys indicated that the ideal and preferred reading length of a post should be 2 minutes.

The Blind Following Phenomenon
The second set of results was based on the responses obtained from the Main Survey. The primarily objective of this analysis was to provide further insight with respect to the association between the peripheral route and the "Blind Following" phenomenon. Furthermore, the analysis provides cognizance about misinformation caused by a messaged tossed due to familiarity with the source of message.

The 'Blind Following' phenomenon was analyzed in terms of number of interactions, presence of influencer and source type. Data from the Main Survey indicated that 43.4% of the participants chose posts with medium levels of likes, views, comments, and shares when the post featured a known source and an influencer. This translates to when a known source presents news content to viewers and is accompanied by the presence of an influencer there is an average response to the message. However, 39.6% of users selected posts with high levels of likes, views, comments, and shares when the source was known and there was no influencer. This suggests that in the absence of an influencer, social media users prefer content that is supported by high levels of interactions such as number of likes, views, comments, and shares. In addition to this, 52.8% of the participants selected content with low levels of likes, views, comments, and shares when the source was unknown, but there was an influencer present. This suggest that in the absence of a known source, users tend to look for content supported by an influencer, rather than the number of interactions.

Source vs Influencer
This section of the survey was used to obtain information about the social media users' likelihood to toss a message when the communicator source is known. Additionally, it provides cognizance of the significance of an influencer when the source of communication is unknown. Results show that 50.9% of the participants rejected the post with cohesive and non-coherent information, supported by a known source but not containing an influencer, meaning that the message (cohesive and non-coherent) was not discarded, expressed as dislike although the source was known to the viewers.

5. DISCUSSION

According to the results of this research, respondents indicated their strong preference for information that would not need high cognitive elaboration. With 65.7% of overall responses, people were not willing to inquire about the issue any deeper and instead wanted to jump into the next available post right away. This can be taken as a recreation of the social media scenario when information with heavy loads of arguments is discarded by users due to low motivation or low cognitive ability. Engagement seemed to be the highest when low ability to think about the issue was at play. Although the content in each message was exactly the same with the only difference of length and language, people in the peripheral route claimed that the information presented to them was informative, interesting and satisfying together with more positive than negative descriptions. On the other end, individuals who took the central route survey claimed that the information was boring, unsatisfying, and described it with negative terms.

Another important aspect is that the central route survey indicated a reading time of 6 minutes whereas the peripheral indicated 2 minutes. Most of social media post and news tend to keep messages under the 3-minute mark as an appealing attention grabber. Thus, social media users have an intrinsic preference for the peripheral route in comparison to the central route when presented with news and informational content.

Social media users begin to get involved with virtual groups, accounts and communities that share, support, or reinforce their beliefs and ideas. One form of reward that may be especially relevant in the communication context comes from anticipated and received social approval. (Falk & Scholz, 2018). This takes us back to the idea that, the bigger the social support, the more acceptable the initial message is. The persuaded user now has closed him or herself to other forms of persuasion and left vulnerable towards blind following practices. Blind following at unhealthy levels may lead to other, more serious social phenomena as in the case of cancel culture. In terms of the value that the brain assigns to a process of this nature, activity is typically higher during consensus with others' opinions than when participants' opinions diverge from a group (Falk & Scholz, 2018). The individual and its social circle have been persuaded to a point where they are not receptive to other points of view. Subsequently, other people and thoughts deviating from their beliefs will be rejected and cancelled.

Our findings demonstrate that *Blind Following* and *Cancel Culture* are a result of a synergy between neurophysiological, social and psychological mechanisms. The individual's attention gets caught by peripheral cues in the form of visuals, endorsers, likes, views, etc. Then, several characteristics of the message are evaluated by the viewer giving more importance to those cues that comply with self-referential cognition. Being able to connect with other individuals that may be considered of higher social relevance, gives the social media user a sense of belonging. It is then when the Dopamine Reward pathway in the brain is activated. Together with this, certain areas of the brain that control processes such as reasoning, memory and emotion are stimulated. Influencers and endorsers act as a link between one user and another. This also strengthens self- referential cognition by introducing new people who share the same ideas and points of view as the user and social support increases.

6. CONCLUSION

This research was conducted with the purpose of providing cognizance about the persuasion process that social media users may engage with when presented with news and informational content. It observed the behavioral effects that may come from a persuasive process having its initial stages in the peripheral route of ELM. Although this study does not generalize the behavior of all social media

users, it demonstrates the roles played by central and peripheral routes of social media users and their consequent behaviors.

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The New Consumed Consumer: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Compulsive and Impulsive Buying Habits of Gen Z

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Abstract

During the pandemic consumer spending on impulsive and compulsive purchases increased. This study explored the impact of personality on pandemic compulsive and impulsive buying. Results show that those who score higher on extroversion were more likely to shop compulsively while those who score high on conscientiousness were less likely to shop impulsively. Those who spent more time online were more likely to shop compulsively. Significant gender differences exist, with males shopping more compulsively and impulsively during the pandemic than females. Males also had higher levels of neuroticism which led to increased impulsive consumption.

Keywords: Impulse buying, compulsive buying, personality, pandemic shopping

1. INTRODUCTION

First, it was the panic buying of toilet paper. Next, a massive increase in the sale of freezers, Pelotons and home gym equipment, followed by outdoor heaters in the colder months (Paul, Kumar & Chowdhury, 2020). The global Covid-19 pandemic that started in early 2020 and continues today has led to unprecedented shifts in demand, as well as significant changes to consumption habits. In times of significant upheaval, it is common for consumers to buy things to feel more in control (Arafat & Yasir, 2020). This research aims to explore whether the pandemic has led consumers to become compulsive or impulsive buyers and whether personality plays a role in this reaction.

This study focuses on the compulsive and impulsive spending habits of Gen Z over the past year. Gen Z is defined as the generation born within the years of 1997-2013, following the millennial generation. This generation has been raised surrounding the internet and social media and are considered one of the most technologically advanced generations (Schroth, 2019). Gen Z's use of technology continues to drastically increase. Recent Data shows that 98% of Gen Z own a smartphone and average a usage time of about 4 hours per day (Kastenholz, 2021). The most popular social platforms among Gen Z are Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest. However, platform usage habits have shifted to better fit Gen Z's desire for social commerce. The algorithms from these platforms provide a more personalized shopping experience which reduces the distractions between purchase desire and checkout (Kastenholz, 2021).

While in recent years researchers have begun to look at the consumption habits of Gen Z consumers, watching this younger generation experience a global pandemic and understanding how they have responded is important. This generation has a lot of spending power, as well as purchasing influence (Noble, Haytko & Phillips, 2009). If the pandemic has led to more compulsive and impulsive buying, there are repercussions to be considered long-term. Compulsive and impulsive buying can cause consumers to experience financial hardships, personal conflicts and lead to increased depression, guilt and anxiety (Lejoyeux & Weinstein, 2010). If Gen Z consumers are consuming to avoid feelings of anxiety during the pandemic, they may actually be generating more negative long-term outcomes. In addition to consuming compulsively, previous research has demonstrated a relationship between compulsive and impulsive buying and personality, however this relationship was not explored specifically with Gen Z consumers and was conducted without the pandemic as a driver (Shahjehan, Qureshi, Zeb, & Saifullah, 2012; Shehzadi et al., 2016). This study seeks to fill that gap.

This research paper examines the relationship between the Big Five Personality Traits and the compulsive and impulsive buying trends of Gen Z throughout the pandemic. First, a review of the current literature is presented. This is followed by an explanation of methodology, results, and discussion. The paper concludes with limitations and directions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Impulsive and Compulsive Consumption
In March of 2020, parts of the US began a state of lockdown to slow the spread of COVID-19. With tensions running high, many consumers found themselves seeking comfort and shopping when faced with a world filled with uncertainty (Arafat & Yasir, 2020). This may have caused consumers to be in an addictive state, purchasing to feel better. Reliance on shopping to relieve feelings of anxiety and depression by creating an escape through material goods can lead to addictive behaviors like compulsive and impulsive buying (Darrat, Aadel, Mahmoud, & Amyx, 2016). Shopping to reduce anxiety has long been discussed by researchers (Esquirol, 1838). Even Freud (1895) described compulsions as a way to reduce anxiety. Compulsive and impulsive shopping results in behavioral patterns and consequences similar to that of addictive drugs as both hyperstimulate the dopamine reward system, making us feel better (Hartston, 2012).

Impulsive and compulsive buying can occur simultaneously during a purchase, however there are key differences in their meanings. Impulsive buying is a more common behavior, as the majority of people make purchases without much deliberation from time to time. Impulse buying is defined as a sudden and compelling urge to buy immediately. Compulsive buying on the other hand, is considered a psychological disorder where a person experiences an uncontrollable urge to buy, often planned. This urge is usually triggered by negative events or feelings that can only be rectified through buying. This behavior ultimately leads to negative consequences, as compulsive buying is about obtaining short-term relief from negative feelings, rather than a need or desire for specific items (Faber, 2010).

In their Phenomenological Exploration of Compulsive Buying (1989), O'Guinn and Faber defined compulsive consumption as "a response to an uncontrollable drive or desire to obtain, use or experience a feeling, substance, or activity that leads an individual to repetitively engage in a behavior that will ultimately cause harm to the individual and/or to others." Emotional relief from negative emotions (such as pandemic driven anxiety) is the most common driver of compulsive buying. This relief is short-term and typically leads to an eventual increase in anxiety (Dittmar, Beattie & Friese, 1996; Dittmar, 2000; Dittmar & Drury, 2000). Compulsive buying has other negative consequences as well. Compulsive consumers can accumulate significant financial debts, have legal issues or interpersonal conflicts, and experience feelings of depression and guilt (Christenson, et al., 1994; Mc Elroy, Keck Jr, & Phillips, 1995). Research suggests that while not the same, impulsive and compulsive buying are related. Both may occur due to a lack of control or negative feelings or events. It is also possible that impulsive buying can develop into compulsive buying (Sun, Wu, & Youn, 2004).

Impulsive purchases usually occur when a consumer perceives a product or brand to match their own attitude or self-view. This helps the consumer to connect the product to their own identity (Xu, 2008). Therefore, these products and brands act as ways to outwardly express a person's identity to others. Impulse buyers tend to be more social, status-conscious, and image-concerned. Both impulsive and compulsive buyers also tend to experience more anxiety and difficulty controlling their emotions,

therefore it is harder for them to resist emotional urges to spend money. In addition to this, impulsive and compulsive shoppers often experience less happiness, so shopping can often create this temporary happiness for them, especially as it can tie into not being able to resist emotional urges while spending money regardless of price (Zimmerman, 2012).

While research has shown that anxiety and lack of control can lead to compulsive and impulsive buying, there are also individual drivers of these behaviors. One key area of focus has been personality. Several studies have shown that personality can lead to impulsive and compulsive buying (Shahjehan, Qureshi, Zeb, & Saifullah, 2012; Shehzadi, Ahmad-ur-Rehman, Cheema, & Ahkam, 2016; Farid & Ali, 2018).

3. PERSONALITY-THE BIG FIVE

One of the key variables that influences our need to buy is our personality. The Big Five Personality Traits model was originally created by D. W. Fiske in 1949 in order to portray the primary dimensions of individual differences in personality traits. The five personality traits can be categorized as: Neuroticism, Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Agreeableness (Tsao, Wen-Chin, & Chang, 2010). The personality of individuals is a unique dynamic of characteristics of a person, both physical and psychological, that have a direct influence on behavior and responses to a social and physical environment. It would then stand to reason that personality would always influence consumer buying. This has led many marketers to make use of personality traits in their advertisements of products to target specific market segments. These personality traits not only help marketers identify which segments to target, but they also influence consumer's impulsive buying behaviors (Gangai, KhagendraNtah, & Agrawal; 2016). This study will evaluate the relationship between personality and pandemic consumption habits, specifically the impact on compulsive and impulsive buying.

4. HYPOTHESES

Studies have shown that online purchases are more driven by impulsive buying behaviors, rather than rational, planned, and controlled behaviors (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2015). Research shows that purchase motivation is positively influenced by three of the five big traits: Openness, Extraversion, and Neuroticism (Tsao, Wen-Chin, & Chang, 2010). It is likely that consumers who score higher on openness, extraversion and neuroticism would be more likely to be impulsive or compulsive shoppers. More specifically, researchers have found that openness is significantly correlated with impulsive buying (Shahjehan, Qureshi, Zeb, & Saifullah, 2012; Shehzadi et al., 2016). Those who are more open also tend to explore and try things more readily so it would make sense that those with higher levels of openness would be more likely to search for new items to buy during the pandemic, when less exploration could be done in person or through activities outside the home. Therefore,

H1: Consumers who score high on Openness are more likely to have shopped impulsively during the pandemic than those who score low on Openness.

Previous research has found evidence of a relationship between extroversion and compulsive buying, however extraversion was not found to be correlated with impulse buying (Gangai, KhagendraNtah, & Agrawal; 2016). Shehzadi et al (2016) found that extroversion is negatively correlated with compulsive buying, while several other studies have found that extroversion is positively correlated with compulsive behavior (Shahjehan, Qureshi, Zeb, & Saifullah, 2012; Balabanis, 2001; Bivens, Gore & Claycomb, 2013). Due to the majority of researchers finding extroversion to be positively correlated with compulsive buying, it is expected that those who are extroverted will have consumed more compulsively during the pandemic, as they had less outlets for their energy and need for connection.

H2: Consumers who score higher on Extraversion are more likely to have shopped compulsively during the pandemic than those who score lower on Extroversion.

Several studies have found negative relationships between conscientiousness and impulsive buying, such that those who are more conscientious are less likely to shop impulsively (Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001; Mowen & Spears, 1999). Those who were conscientious before the pandemic most likely continued to be conscientious and therefore were not impulse shopping.

H3: Consumers who score higher on Conscientiousness are less likely to have shopped impulsively during the pandemic than those who score lower on Conscientiousness.

Although personality plays a large role in impulsive and compulsive buying, it is not the only driving factor (Brunelle & Grossman, 2022). Social media use leads to increased social pressure and comparison, especially for young people. This can lead to increased compulsive buying (Islam, Sheikh, Hameed, Khan, & Azam, 2018; Sharif & Yeoh, 2018). During the pandemic, young people embraced their phones even more than usual and those who used social media more may have been more inclined to consume compulsively. A recent study found that social media marketing has a direct impact on impulsive buying, as unplanned purchases and expenses increased 40% due to social media factors (Bansal, Manoj, Kumar, 2018).

H4: Those who have higher levels of social media usage were more likely to consume compulsively and impulsively than those with lower levels of usage.

Social sciences may suggest that men and women have significantly different tendencies. For example, in 2011 Weinsburg and DeYong studied the Big Five Traits and concluded that on average, women tend to score higher on extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism than men. When it comes to shopping as a whole, research suggests that men and women differ when it comes to the experience of shopping. Women tend to experience shopping as pleasurable due to social aspects, and any activity that yields pleasure has the potential to become addictive (Campbell, 2000). However, when it comes to the cognitive attitude of shopping online specifically, research shows that females value the utility of online shopping less than males do (Hasan, 2010). Research has also found that women tend to plan their shopping more than men, making men more likely to shop impulsively or compulsively (Cobb & Hoyer, 1986; Block & Morwitz, 1999). Therefore, although females enjoy shopping in general more, the online components of shopping may result in males displaying more of the compulsive and impulsive characteristics.

H5: Males consumed more compulsively and impulsively during the pandemic than females.

When it comes to personality and gender significant gender differences for agreeableness have not been found consistently, and are generally non-existent for conscientiousness. For openness, women are more open to feelings while men are more open to experiences and ideas (Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001; Feingold, 1994; Feldt, Metsäpelto, Kinnunen, & Pulkkinen, 2007). Similar to openness, men and women differ on extroversion such that women are more expressive and warm and men are more assertive and seek excitement (Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001; Feingold, 1994). For Neuroticism, women tend to score higher overall. However, this difference fades when online (Bunker, Saysavanh, & Kwan, 2021). Also, while women tend to score generally higher as it relates to anxiety and depression, men tend to score higher on neuroticism related to impulsivity (Feingold, 1994; Lengua & Stormshak, 2000). With purchases being made mostly online during the pandemic, men may be more likely to have higher levels of neuroticism and to have shopped impulsively.

H6: Neuroticism mediated the relationship between gender and shopping impulsively, such that men who scored higher on neuroticism were more likely to shop impulsively.

5. METHODOLOGY

The Big Five Test is to date the most scientifically validated and reliable psychological model to measure personality traits (Goldberg, 1993). The big five test was included as part of a Qualtrics survey in order to evaluate personality. That test measures personality using Likert Scale questions, including "During the pandemic I have bought things I don't need", "During the pandemic I have bought things I did not plan to buy", "Since the pandemic I consider myself an impulse shopper", etc. The survey also included modified compulsive and impulsive shopping scales (Faber & O'Guinn, 1992) as well as other questions regarding time spent online shopping, and work history over the past year. The target of this survey was Generation Z and it was posted on social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat. The survey was also distributed in various college classes as well for extra credit. There were 100 participants who took the survey. Five participants were removed due to incomplete data leaving a usable sample of 95 participants.

6. ANALYSIS

An analysis of variants was run in order to see if there were significant differences between personality types and consumption behaviors. When looking at compulsive consumption, only extraversion was significant ($F_{(12)}=2.192$, $p=.046$). Thus H1 was not confirmed, as those who scored higher on openness did not shop more or less impulsively or compulsively. Those who scored higher on Extraversion, however, were more likely to consume compulsively, confirming H2. There were no other significant differences between personality types and compulsive consumption.

When comparing personality types and impulsive consumption, Conscientiousness was significant ($F_{(12)}=2.517$, $p=.024$). Those who scored higher on conscientiousness were less likely to purchase impulsively, confirming H3. There were no other significant differences between personality and impulsive consumption.

Online usage was not related to impulsive consumption, however there was a significant difference in compulsive consumption. Those who spent more time online were also significantly more likely to compulsively consume ($F_{(12)}=4.915$, $p=<.001$), confirming H4.
Gender differences:

Gender was significant for both impulsive ($F_{(2)}=7.513$, $p=<.001$) and compulsive consumption ($F_{(2)}=13.725$, $p=<.001$). Men were more likely to consume impulsively ($m=3.111$) compared to women ($m=2.32$). Men were also more likely to consume compulsively ($m=4.17$) compared to women (3.27) confirming H5.

Personality was consistent across genders except for Neuroticism ($F_{(2)}=5.570$, $p=<.001$). Men had higher levels of neuroticism ($m=25.7$) than women ($m=19.7$). When looking at gender, personality and impulsive shopping, an interaction was found between Neuroticism and impulsiveness ($F_{(33)}=4.089$, $p=.011$). Men were more likely to score higher in neuroticism and impulsively shop, confirming H6.

7. DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The results from this study demonstrate that extroverts have shopped more compulsively during the pandemic. This makes sense as extroverts may have had significant life changes when the pandemic began to limit social engagements and outings. While marketers could target these consumers more, caution should be used when targeting extroverts as compulsive shopping can lead to increased negative emotions, and buyers remorse. Conscientiousness allowed consumers to refrain from impulsive shopping despite significant anxiety and uncertainty. These consumers seem to be able to control their spending despite significant external pressure. Of great interest is the relationship of neuroticism and impulse buying. Men do tend to score higher on neuroticism as it relates to impulsivity, and these results show men have shopped more impulsively during the pandemic. It makes sense that men who score higher on neuroticism would impulse shop even more. Many believe women tend to shop to relieve anxiety but this research adds to the evidence that in times of difficulty, men may seek purchases as a way to relieve anxiety, especially those who score higher on neuroticism.

Compulsive and impulsive buying have negative consequences for consumers and society. If Gen Z consumers, especially males, extroverts and males with higher levels of neuroticism are shopping more compulsively and impulsively, it is important to attempt to reduce the anxiety and underlying negative emotions causing these habits. If consumers continue to purchase impulsively and compulsively, we may continue to see an increase in consumer debt, interpersonal conflicts and depression, guilt and anxiety. While in the short term compulsive and impulsive buying may be good for business, long term, negative emotions and personal strife will lead to decreased consumption, lack of disposable income and negative affect towards brands. Future research should continue to investigate compulsive and impulsive buying trends as the pandemic winds down. The more information we have as to what consumers are doing now, the better prepared we can be for the future.

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Channel Choices in a Post COVID World: A Cross National Study of the U.S. and India

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic came and altered every aspect of our lives, from how we work, study, play, purchase, everything! Retailers had to adjust their strategies and consumers had to decide how to go about everyday choices. The general consensus is that people will not be moving back to pre-covid patterns (Pantano, E., Pizzi, g., Scarpi, D., & Dennis, c., 2020). Research on the retail side has examined the impact of Covid-19 on supply chain effectiveness (Ivanov, 2020) and the ability to maintain service standards (Tarki, A., Levy, P., & Weiss, J., 2020). Prentice, Quach and Thaicon (2020) studied the moderating effects of retailer intervention on panic buying in the United States and Australia and found that retailers, depending on the product category, can exercise some control over supply chains and consumer purchases. On the consumer side, some have focused on what influences consumer behavior during times of disaster. For example, Di Crosta, A., Ceccato, I., Marchetti, D., La Malva, P., Maiella, R., Cannito, L., & Di Domenico, A. (2021) found that during a time of crisis, anxiety and panic led Italian consumers to buy essential goods, while depression led to purchasing of non-essentials.

There are two sides to this coin. On the one hand, suppliers of goods are modifying their back channels to accommodate the changing patterns imposed by the pandemic. Prominent innovations include home-based services, direct to consumer channels as in premium products that can replicate the restaurant experience in the home, rapid investment to accommodate curbside and drive through delivery of goods (Boumphrey, S., 2021). The other side of the coin is consumer response to these retailing innovations and to the pandemic, in general. Zwanka and Buff (2020) outline the different

spheres of consumer activity that have been and continue to be impacted by the pandemic. They compare and contrast the pandemic and its influence on consumer behaviors with other epochal events such as the Vietnam War, 9/11 and the 2008 worldwide economic contraction. They attempt to predict which of the learned behaviors will persist after the pandemic. For example, Zwanka and Buff (2020) speculate that the shift to online purchasing of food is one that will persist at a higher level than before the pandemic. The changes in consumer behaviors brought on by the pandemic will be important for marketers as they redesign their strategies (Shim & Cho, 2020; Zwanka & Buff, 2020).

Is there a significant change in channel choice at the beginning, during and after the pandemic? What are the reasons for these changes, if any? In this paper, we have focused on finding out to *what extent learned shopping behaviors, during the pandemic, would persist after the pandemic is controlled and we return to a semblance of normality*. We asked this question in the context of retail channel choice and we compare shopping patterns in two countries, India and the US. Both these countries have been significantly impacted by Covid, albeit at different times. As Covid is a rapidly evolving virus, we have to establish that the data for this study were collected before the onslaught of the delta variant in India and the U.S. We examined shopping patterns at the start of and during the global pandemic. We also asked consumers about their future intentions with respect to channel choice for a variety of goods and services. The data we have collected enables us to establish patterns at three points in time and can provide some perspective on future consumer choices in a rapidly changing landscape. Zanka and Buff (2020) suggest research that surveys consumers during, just after and three to five years after the pandemic. While the world is still struggling with variants of the virus, our research hopes to shed light on future intentions with respect to channel choice for select categories of consumer products.

There is considerable research on channel choice and consumer behaviors. Specifically, in this paper, we examine the effects of social distancing (situational), product availability (time), and fear of Covid (antecedent) on channel choice. We consider product availability and supply chain issues (Dabholkar & Bagozzi, 2002; PwC, 2020), as well as personal safety concerns as possibly having an impact on channel choice. Unlike previous research (Konus, Neslin & Verhoef, 2014; Neslin & Shankar, 2009) that has been limited to one or two product categories, in this study, we investigate the impact of the selected factors on channel choice for a variety of products to assess the extent of variability.

Finally, we were interested in seeing whether there were any cross national differences. Channel choice is known to be impacted by the extent of development of multiple channels (Meuter, M. L., Ostrom, A. L., Roundtree, R. I., & Bitner, M. J., 2000). Penetration of use of mobile apps and online platforms differs significantly across countries and we expect this to significantly impact channel choice.
The most frequent approach to the issue of channel choice by consumers has revolved around the question of "which one" and "when". In the context of an external shock to the system, such as the global pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus, we expand the focus by exploring the effects of pertinent situational variables on current and future channel choice across multiple product categories and two countries.

Based on the above considerations, the following research questions are addressed in this paper.
1. Is there a significant change in channel choice at the beginning, during and after the pandemic? What are the reasons for these changes, if any?
2. Does channel choice differ significantly across product categories at the beginning, during and after the pandemic?
3. Do consumer behaviors with respect to channel choice differ between countries?

2. THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

Factors affecting Channel Choice
The theory of protective motivation proposes that people protect themselves based on threat appraisal and coping appraisal (Rogers, 1975). In the context of the current pandemic, the severity of the threat depends on one's belief in the severity of the problem, assessment of the chances of being affected by the disease and one's beliefs in the efficacy of suggested protective behaviors. If consumers perceive the threat of Covid to their persons as high, it is more likely that they might seek out shopping situations where they can protect themselves. As the severity of the threat declines and

with more vaccines (protection) being available, we were interested in how consumers' channel choices would differ between the start of the pandemic, at some point in between and at a future time when we hope the pandemic is over.

Sample
An online survey in English was used for both samples, India and the US. The target population of this study includes any woman who has made purchases in the last six months and who is employed. Five point scales were used to determine channel choice (on-line and in-store) for eight product categories. Participants were asked about their channel choice purchases for these categories in three time periods: the period before the pandemic started, in the last month, and their intentions after most people have been vaccinated and we return to normalcy.

3. RESULTS

The proposed research questions were investigating whether consumers' channel choices differed across time points and products within each location. To test for these, a repeated measures ANOVA was run for participants from each individual location (USA and India). Alpha was set at .05 for all significance tests.

Effects of Time and Product Category on Channel Choice
Channel choice was shown to differ significantly across time and type of product. The model explained 23% of the variance across time and 28% across products. When looking at specific comparisons, alcohol was bought significantly more in-store than all other products. Apparel was purchased in significantly more online channels than any other product, and prepared food (restaurants) was ordered in significantly more online channels than every other product except apparel. Regarding which time points showed the most in-store channel choices, time one was significantly more in-store than the other two time points. Time two showed significantly more online channel choices than the other two time points.

In summary, in the US, online shopping increased significantly in time period 2, i.e. when the pandemic was at its peak. Consumers expect to shift more to in-store shopping but nowhere near pre-pandemic levels. The product categories that showed significant differences in channel choices were alcohol, apparel and prepared foods. While people purchased apparel online, they tended to buy alcohol in-store. Prepared foods were also bought online.

For the India location, differences across product type were able to explain over 22% of the variance in channel choice. The India sample indicated a preference for in-store shopping for alcohol and online for apparels. This is similar to what we found in the US sample. The effects of time were less pronounced in this sample.

Change in Shopping Habits and Reasons
In addition to the main effects of time and product category, respondents were also asked if they had changed their preferred store during the pandemic and why. Chi square tests were run.

When indicating whether they changed stores since news of COVID, participants from the US said they changed significantly less than participants from India ($\chi2(2) = 18.493$, $p < .001$, $\varphi = .224$). Participants from India were more likely to change stores because their old store did not enforce masks than participants from the US. Additionally, no US participants indicated cost as their reason for changing stores whereas some participants from India cited this as a reason they changed stores.

Finally, higher proportions of US participants changed stores to try to support more local businesses compared to Indian participants.

4. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The results indicate that online shopping is definitely here to stay. Prior to the pandemic, much of the research had pointed to in-store shopping being preferable for goods that had a sensory component.

Our findings indicate that across all product categories, consumers will continue to prefer online channels. The incidence of online shopping may not be as high as during the height of the pandemic, but certainly higher than before the pandemic started. Retailers and marketers need to incorporate online channels as part of their regular place strategy and engage in agile retailing strategies (Pantano et al. 2020; Sjödin, D., Parida, V., Kohtamäki, M., & Wincent, J. 2020).

Additionally, they need to invest in the online channel so that the shopping experience is a good one. It is no longer just a channel to place orders. Online channels should be equally cognizant of service values. These results hold true in both the US and India.

This study is limited by the deficiencies of all survey research. It is also a cross-sectional, rather than a longitudinal study. Shopping behavior in time T3 was reported behavioral intention rather than actual behavior and to this extent, limits our findings. Future research should explore actual behaviors and compare these to past behaviors.

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Post-Pandemic Revenge Shopping: The Potential Application of Reactance Theory

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In March, 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Covid-19 virus spreading worldwide a pandemic. The pandemic has had social, economic and political impact around the globe, as countries imposed lockdowns in an effort to contain the virus. Malls were shuttered along with most stores, restaurants, bars, movie theaters, gyms, and libraries. Travel was halted. As things began to reopen, consumers rushed to make purchases they had not been able to make from their favorite places.

Recent popular periodicals and newspapers, online and in print, have described consumer post-lockdown buying as "revenge buying" or "revenge shopping". Articles have used the terms to explain escalating demand for clothing, travel and entertainment. (Bayindir 2020, Morgan 2021, Ahmed 2021). The term "revenge" can actually be traced back to the organizational management literature when an article cited a 1993 survey by Northwestern National Life on consumer aggression (Diamond, 1997). At that time, the term referred to outraged customers acting aggressively in the workplace. From that point, the literature on revenge behavior has been studied using the words revenge and vengeance as synonyms or interchangeably (Bechwati and Morrin 2003, Stuckless and Goranson 1992).

The prevailing conceptualization at the time was that consumer revenge was linked to a service failure. Stuckless and Goranson (1992) spoke of the "infliction of punishment or injury in return for perceived wrong." In 2001, Cota-McKinley, Woody and Bell, operationalized the concept as "the infliction of harm in return for perceived injury or insult" (p.343). This line of research continued through 2006 when Aquino et. al. defined revenge as "an effort undertaken by the victim of harm to inflict damage, injury, discomfort or punishment on the party judged responsible for causing harm"

(p.654). Little work on the notion of consumer revenge was done after that time that did not link the behavior to a service failure or an unhappy consumer.

A modification of the term took the form of "revenge shopping" with a very different definition, and first appeared in 2011. It was used to describe Chinese shoppers. In this new iteration, consumers in China in the 1980s were described as "revenge shopping" after the nation began to emerge from conditions of long-term hunger and engaged in food buying sprees and flooded restaurants. More recently, the phenomena was seen again in China in 2020 when the Hermes Guangzhou store reopened after the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. Consumers' urge to spend money they couldn't spend on luxury brands resulted in a $2.7m day for Hermes. In China, the term "baofuxing xiaofei" translates as "revenge shopping." The term has been widely used in the popular press to describe "consumers making up for lost time by getting malls and luxury emporiums hard, buying up feel good items that they have been starved for during lockdown."

This use of the concept of revenge shopping differs from that early organization management literature on revenge behavior. There is no service failure, consumer victimization or aggressive behavior aimed at doing harm. The current usage instead, looks at revenge shopping occurring "when individuals want to go shopping to compensate for a period in which they were prevented from buying and to relieve the negative feelings triggered by that period of deprivation."

Some recent work has been done focusing on panic buying and revenge shopping as they relate to the Covid-19 pandemic (Lins, Aquino, Costa & Koch, 2021). The article acknowledges that there is still no consensual definition of revenge buying behavior but there appears to be agreement that revenge buying occurs when individuals want to go shopping to compensate for a period in which they were prevented from buying and alleviating the negative feelings triggered by that period of deprivation like confinement during a pandemic. More recently, Malholtra (2021) developed an empirical scale specifically for measuring revenge buying due to the pandemic, but this scale is more closely associated with missing the overall shopping experience, not purchasing out of revenge or negative feelings like anger specifically. Lins suggests that Brehm's Reactance Theory provides a better understanding of revenge buying behavior.

Brehm's Reactance Theory
In 1966, Brehm presented a theory of psychological reactance in which he addressed the motivation to regain a freedom after it has been lost or threatened. The theory rests on two assumptions. First, that people are convinced that they possess certain freedoms to engage in certain behaviors. Second, is that they perceive that they cannot do so or that the freedom is threatened. Reactance is the motivational arousal that comes when people experience a threat to or the loss of their free behaviors. The unpleasant motivational arousal serves as a motivator to restore one's freedom. The response or strength of reactance depends on the importance of the threatened freedom and the perceived magnitude of the threat (Brehm, 1966).

Rarely had a researcher attempted measurements of the state of reactance. This is a result of Brehm's original conceptualization of reactance as "an intervening, hypothetical variable" that cannot be measured directly (Brehm 1966)   In 2006 however, Miron and Brehm suggested that reactance might be assessed through measurement of the subjective feeling that accompanies the motivation to restore freedom. They also suggested the use of physiological measures to directly assess reactance. (Miron & Brehm, 2006) Since that article, researchers have looked more closely at the question of how to measure the experience of reactance. In the Miron and Brehm (2006) review of reactance theory, they suggested one measurement tool that had been developed by Hong (1992) to measure reactance as a trait. Hong's Psychological Reactance Scale (HPRS) is still the most commonly used instrument, translated into many languages and encouraging debate on number of items and factor structure.

Research indicates that reactance can be measured. It is possible to assess people's experience to a threatening situation, the cognitive and affective processes that are activated by it, and the physiological arousal and activity in the brain that accompany the attempt to restore freedom (Steindl, Jonas, Sittenthaler, Traut-Mattausch & Greenberg, 2015). So while reactance and revenge buying can be measured, unfortunately, for the reaction or revenge to occur, consumers have to feel they are able or soon to be able to perform the behavior that they have been deprived of. With a pandemic that is entering a third year, the question of if and when consumers will be able to revenge shop will be hard to determine.

Future Research

If revenge buying as a response to the pandemic can be studied, there would be many significant avenues to explore. First, what type of consumers would be most likely to revenge shop? While some consumers will feel more deprived and seeking to regain their power, others may have never truly felt without control. Some consumers have continued to shop, travel, entertain and spend their time as they did pre-pandemic. Others may have never wanted those things and are therefore unlikely to miss them. It will be important to measure the impact of revenge shopping on the post-purchase evaluation as well.   Typically consumption due to negative affect does not lead to customer satisfaction.   Would this remain true of revenge buying post-pandemic. Lastly, consumers seeking revenge typically buy things that allow them to express themselves and their new freedom. The types of products purchased will be important to explore as items that can signal that freedom are more likely to be important to consumers. These areas can help marketers prepare for consumption changes when the pandemic does wind down, and allow consumers to be targeted more effectively, leading to overall consumer satisfaction.

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The Interplay of Time Attitude, Self-Efficacy, and Health Consciousness in the Consumer Journey toward Healthful Food Consumption

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Abstract

The quest toward healthful food consumption is challenging, as evinced by obesity in more than 30 percent of American adults (Seiders and Petty 2004) or insufficient consumption of fruits and vegetables (Bartels and van den Berg 2011). How can consumers make better choices in food shopping? It depends on the types of consumers. Current research proposes three main factors of time attitude, self-efficacy, and health consciousness, that help categorize different segments of consumers within the grocery shopping context. Using the data collected from 238 grocery shoppers exiting supermarkets in the northeastern suburban town of the United States, we segment the grocery shoppers into six distinct segments using nonhierarchical k-means cluster analysis. For each of these distinct segments, marketers can provide customized suggestions to help achieve healthful food consumption. The results showing the interplay of the three proposed constructs of time attitude, self-efficacy, and health consciousness within different consumer segments extend the current market segmentation research in the food domain and offers insights on how to formulate actionable recommendations for marketers, to help consumers in their journey ultimately toward a healthier living.

1. INTRODUCTION

Every consumer strives for a healthy life. One main path to this common end in each consumer journey regards healthful food consumption. Despite a common consensus on what constitutes as right choices in food, consumers often fail in achieving healthful eating, as evinced by obesity in more than 30 percent of American adults (Seiders & Petty, 2004), insufficient consumption of fruits and vegetables (Bartels & van den Berg, 2011), or folate even when pregnant (LaBrosse & Albrecht, 2013). Clearly, the quest toward healthy food consumption, riddled with obstacles, is not as easy as it appears. What can responsible marketers do, to help consumers facing difficult choices in food shopping? The current research delves into answering this question and proposes three main factors that influence the consumer behavior regarding healthful food consumption. Using the three main factors of time attitude, self-efficacy, and health consciousness, we segment the grocery shoppers into six distinct segments. We then offer customized suggestions for marketers to help promote healthful food consumption in these segments.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Time Attitude

Time has been cited as one of the major barriers to healthful food consumption (Eikenberry & Smith, 2004). Interestingly, the attitude toward time may exert more significant influence on consumer behavior than the availability of actual time itself. In the context of food shopping, several researchers studied the impact of time: Time perceptions differentiate working wives from housewives in preparing meals (Jackson et al., 1985); time pressure forces parents of active children to cope with unhealthy eating (Alm & Olsen, 2017); attitude toward time has been used as one of the segmentation criteria in studying food consumers (Chetthamrongchai & Davies, 2000). Healthful food consumption begins with careful selection of healthful food, which inevitably will require spending time on grocery shopping. This attitude toward time spent on grocery shopping will impact the effectiveness of certain types of marketing communications. We propose that marketers must communicate differently to consumers who vary in terms of their attitude toward time, especially time spent on food shopping. Thus, we conceptualize and measure the degree of willingness to spend time on grocery shopping as one of the market segmentation criteria.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, especially regarding processing information relevant to food purchases, determines how consumers choose food (Mai & Hoffmann, 2012). Choosing the right food is an important task, as many consumers know someone who suffered from a disease that they believe could have been prevented by proper diet (Grubor & Djokic, 2016). If consumers strongly believe that it is too difficult to minimize unwanted additives in our food, for example, they may not try as much to make the right choice in buying food that do not contain artificial preservatives, colors, antibiotics, hormones, synthetic fertilizers, or pesticides. Actual education level may be related to this perception and influence healthful food consumption behavior (Dimitri & Dettmann, 2012). We conceptualize self-efficacy in this research as the degree of how much consumers believe in their own ability to achieve the goal of healthful food consumption.

Health Consciousness

It is natural to hypothesize that the overall level of health consciousness will influence the consumer behavior towards healthful eating and healthful food purchases (Mai & Hoffmann, 2012). We aim to be more specific in facets of health consciousness, particularly focusing on consumer attitudes driving action. Whether consumers are willing to read nutrition information, for example, can determine the

quality of decisions regarding food consumption. In fact, positive effects of educating consumers to utilize nutritional labels has long been advocated (Nayga et al., 1998). We thus conceptualize a facet of health consciousness as the degree of willingness to exert effort into learning more about healthful food consumption.

3. DATA AND ANALYSIS RESULTS

Data on the three proposed segmentation criteria of time attitude, self-efficacy, and health consciousness were collected from 238 grocery shoppers exiting supermarkets in the northeastern suburban town of the United States. Using cluster analysis, we found six distinct segments within this dataset with an overall R-squared of 0.70. Cluster 1 (n=25, 11%) consists of optimistic readers with time to spare. Cluster 2 (n=53, 22%) are those who don't want to read nutritional information yet have time to care about achieving healthful food consumption. Cluster 3 (n=34, 14%) consists of those who are pressed for time but are optimistic about their self-efficacy. Cluster 4 (n=52, 22%) consists of those highly willing to absorb information with moderate levels of time attitude. Cluster 5 (n=39, 16%) are under time pressure and lack willingness to understand information. Cluster 6 (n=35, 15%) refuse to exert effort presumably because they don't believe in their own efficacy. Of the six segments, the two large segments of Cluster 2 and Cluster 4 (n=105, 44%) appear to offer hope as well as the practical implications for the marketers, because marketers may be able to employ strategies to either enhance perceptions of self-efficacy in healthful food consumption or capitalize their willingness to understand and process useful information to achieve healthful food consumption.

4. CONTRIBUTION

The results of this research showing the interplay of the three proposed constructs of time attitude, self-efficacy, and health consciousness within consumer behavior regarding food consumption add to the growing body of market segmentation research in the food domain (Aslihan Nasir & Karakaya, 2014; Chetthamrongchai & Davies, 2000; Degeneffe et al., 2009; Kesic & Piri-Rajh, 2003; Onozaka et al., 2011; Peštek et al., 2018) and contribute to the consumer behavior literature by demonstrating different types of consumer behaviors in six different segments in the food market and providing actionable recommendations for marketers to help consumers make better decisions in their journey toward healthful food consumption, and ultimately toward a healthier living.

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A Framework to Enhance Expatriates' Shopping Experience

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Abstract

Researchers have documented shopping experience from different standpoints. However and despite of the fact that their needs and expectations are different from those of local shoppers, no research in this field has been conducted with expatriates. In this paper, we test the conceptual framework with empirical research conducted with expatriates and we help marketers design their customer experience with higher accuracy. Our analysis rests on the integrative framework created by Fiore and Kim in 2007. We conducted in-depth interviews whereby we interviewed 20 expatriates about their customer experience. Our findings suggest that most of the features taken for granted by the shops are of significant importance to expatriate shoppers.

Keywords: Expatriates, shopping experience, integrative framework

1. INTRODUCTION

With this paper, we aim at addressing two targets – academics and professionals in the field of customer experience. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is twofold: First, we test the conceptual framework with empirical research conducted with expatriates. Second, we help marketers to design their customer experience with higher accuracy. To do so, we interviewed 20 expatriates about their customer experience. Our analysis rests on the integrative framework created by Fiore and Kim in 2007. The choice we made stems from the ability of such a framework to capture both the hedonic experience related to the consciousness-emotion-value model and the utilitarian experience-related cognition-affect-behavioral model.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Although Fiore and Kim's integrative framework has been empirically tested since its inception in 2007 (Garrouch, Mzoughi and Chaieb, 2020; Yang, Guo, Xu and Lan, 2019; Sadachar, 2014; Chung and Park, 2009; Sadachar and Fiore, 2016; Virabhakul and Huang, 2018; Lang and Hooker, 2013), this framework has never been tested with expatriates.

The notion of expatriation has been existing for thousands of years, as it was defined as someone who lived and worked overseas (McCall and Hollenbeck, 2002). When a person moves to another culture, the problem is not the difficulty inherent to the host culture, but the difficulty linked to the difference between home and host countries. When first examining adjustment among expatriates, researchers focused on obvious aspects such as food, weather and daily customs, but more recently, authors added other related dimensions that are adjustment to the job, interacting with host-country individuals and to the general nonworking environment (Stroh et al, 2004). The term expatriation is more often than not associated with the labeling of a highly skilled individual who is sent by their employer to work outside of their home country in a subsidiary or private entity for a contracted
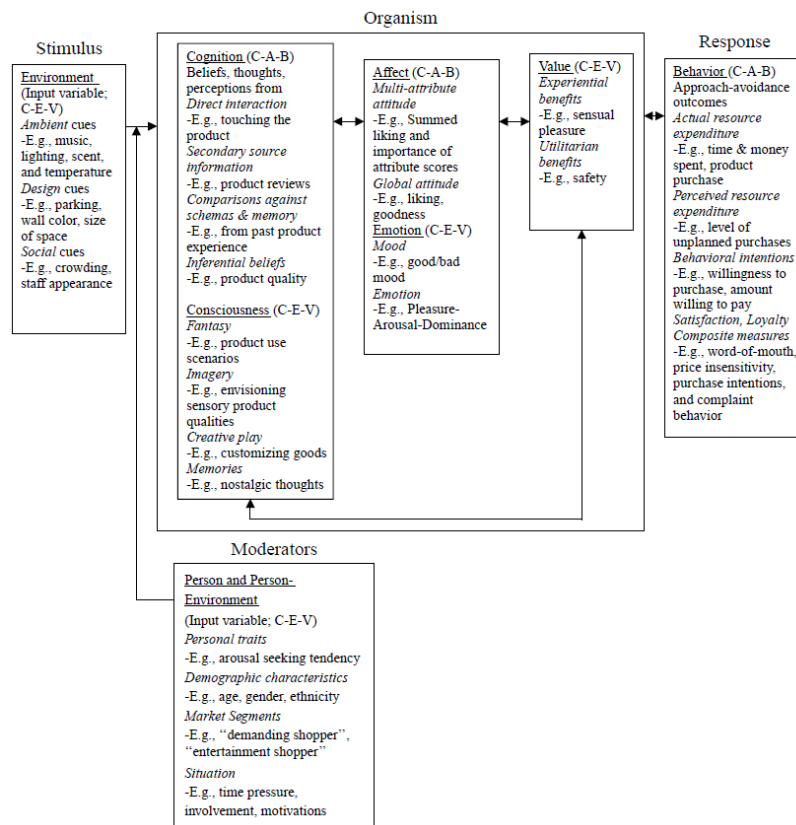
period of time, which requires a specific temporary immigration status, and the receipt of employer relocation (Beaverstock, 2008).

The internationalization of the world's markets has led to a significant increase in the cross-cultural interactions between businesspeople, and in the business world, the use of expatriate managers has led to a large number of professionals living and working overseas and having to adjust not only to a new work culture, but also to new ways of living (Black, Mendenhall and Oddou, 1991).

Previous research has demonstrated that shopping has an influence on the expatriate's consumer behavior by reducing cultural shock (Karsaklian, 2008). Cultural shock can be defined as being the experience consumers have when interacting with other cultures. Because shopping is inherently a social experience (Borges, Chebat and Babin, 2010), it can help expatriates to better adjust to the host culture, if this experience is positive and reassuring.

The integrative framework

Current shopping experiences involve more than consumer acquisition of goods. This experience involves more than merely selecting from the never-ending shelves of products using rational evaluation of product features. In line with changes in consumer shopping experience, models used in empirical study of the experience have expanded. However, these models have not been combined to reflect the integrative (experiential and utilitarian) nature of shopping experience (Fiore and Kim, 2007) as shown in Figure 1.

Organism

Stimulus

Environment
(Input variable; C-E-V)
Ambient cues
-E.g., music, lighting, scent, and temperature
Design cues
-E.g., parking, wall color, size of space
Social cues
-E.g., crowding, staff appearance

Cognition (C-A-B)
Beliefs, thoughts, perceptions from
Direct interaction
-E.g., touching the product
Secondary source information
-E.g., product reviews
Comparisons against schemas & memory
-E.g., from past product experience
Inferential beliefs
-E.g., product quality

Consciousness (C-E-V)
Fantasy
-E.g., product use scenarios
Imagery
-E.g., envisioning sensory product qualities
Creative play
-E.g., customizing goods
Memories
-E.g., nostalgic thoughts

Affect (C-A-B)
Multi-attribute attitude
-E.g., Summed liking and importance of attribute scores
Global attitude
-E.g., liking, goodness
Emotion (C-E-V)
Mood
-E.g., good/bad mood
Emotion
-E.g., Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance

Value (C-E-V)
Experiential benefits
-E.g., sensual pleasure
Utilitarian benefits
-E.g., safety

Response

Behavior (C-A-B)
Approach-avoidance outcomes
Actual resource expenditure
-E.g., time & money spent, product purchase
Perceived resource expenditure
-E.g., level of unplanned purchases
Behavioral intentions
-E.g., willingness to purchase, amount willing to pay
Satisfaction, Loyalty Composite measures
-E.g., word-of-mouth, price insensitivity, purchase intentions, and complaint behavior

Moderators

Person and Person-Environment
(Input variable; C-E-V)
Personal traits
-E.g., arousal seeking tendency
Demographic characteristics
-E.g., age, gender, ethnicity
Market Segments
-E.g., "demanding shopper", "entertainment shopper"
Situation
-E.g., time pressure, involvement, motivations

Figure 1 – Integrative framework

3. METHOD

Fiore and Kim's (2007) conceptual framework integrates components of both the hedonic experience related consciousness-emotion-value model and the utilitarian experience-related cognition-affect-behavior model. The authors created the framework by crossing hedonic and utilitarian boundaries

and the array of variables used in empirical studies of shopping experience, with an emphasis on brick-and-mortar shopping experiences.

Holbrook had extensively studied the hedonic and utilitarian aspects of consumption. Holbrook's (1995), work dwells on various aspects of fantasies (an essentially Freudian emphasis on unconscious desires); feelings (the multifaceted array of emotions that accompany consumption experiences or that characterize responses to advertising); and fun (both in the enjoyment of leisure activities and in various aesthetic responses to the arts or entertainment).

We undertook to apply the integrative framework to expatriates as the population to be analyzed. As suggested by Fiore and Kim (2007), the framework could also guide industry professionals in the development of successful shopping experiences. Thus, the relationships among variables of the framework could be considered when developing a retail environment that is designed to reflect longer-term brand strategies. A qualitative methodology was employed, using protocol analysis and in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with a convenience sample of 20 participants, during which they were invited to freely share their experiences as shoppers in the host country. Qualitative research conducted with in-depth interviews is an appropriate method to explore shoppers experience and used in previous research (Ballantine, Jack and Parsons, 2010; Wagner, 2007).

4. FINDINGS

We analyze our findings, illustrated by verbatims from the respondents, under the light of the definitions of Fiore & Kim (2007) in their integrative framework. In this framework, the authors integrate the consciousness-emotion-value (C-E-V) model and the cognition-affect-behavior (C-A-B) model. Thus the external stimulus composed by the environment, acts on the organism, which is composed of cognition, consciousness, affect, emotion and value, knowing that there is, at some level, interactions among all the variables inside the organism. The output is a behavioral response while the person-to-person environment acts as a moderator intervening on the impact of the stimulus on the organism.

Our findings demonstrate that Fiores and Kim's (2007) theoretical framework is efficient in describing expatriates' shopping experience. The integration of C-E-V and C-A-B seems to make sense and complete each other when describing the variables acting upon the shoppers. For the stimulus, we can observe that both the environment and the cognition play a very important role in conditioning the experience itself.

Environment
The senses play a critical role in purchase decision making. Expatriates rely on their senses coupled with intuition to make their choices amongst unfamiliar products and brands. Therefore, at the C-E-V level, atmospherics marketing serves as cues to these shoppers. Colors, scents, cleanliness, lighting are among the shops' features expatriates pay attention to. Because those shoppers are international, having the right balance between global and local brands represents an added value. Finally, the staff is supposed to be there to help rather than hinder the shoppers from having a pleasant experience because they are replenishing the shelves. At the C-A-B level, the help of testers and staff are determinant in triggering the act of purchase.

Organism
Information search is the main challenge expatriates go through at the C-A-B level when shopping. They rely on reviews but also mainly the information on the packaging and are very disappointed when they do not master the local language and are thus unable to read the packaging. They expect the brands to take this responsibility and help them compare products and prices and help them to make purchase decisions. In general, expatriates enjoy the benefits of good salaries and are willing to pay more for a high quality and authentic product, but if there is no available information to reassure them about making the right choice, they will refrain from buying.

At the C-E-V level, feelings and emotions play an important role. While imagery and fantasy entice these consumers, nostalgia can make them buy products that remind them of past happy moments as well as of their home country where they left their families and friends. Such feelings can lead to

positive attitudes towards brands that know how to stimulate affect in making these shoppers feel welcome and reassure them in their choices. Satisfactory services are critical in their decision to buy products and they will not understand why a place with bad service can charge more. Finally, expatriates tend to exhibit the same behavior they have as shoppers back in their home countries and are frustrated when they notice that due to lack of products or needed services they are unable do so.

Emotions at the C-E-V level are triggered when the shoppers are confronted with unexpected high prices or unfriendly staff. Pleasure and arousal come from interactions with the shop staff however a language barrier can cause disappointment. But, the curiosity about new products generates arousal and the motivation to try new products and experiences.

In terms of value, price keeps being the main driver but expatriates are willing to pay a higher price if the products warrant it. They will also pay more if they are loyal to a global brand and want something they are familiar with; it is a matter of trust.

Response
Expatriates' behavior at the C-A-B level demonstrates that they are willing to make the needed effort to buy the products they want when they are abroad as opposed to what they would have done back home. The challenge in the host country is to know where to go to find the products they are looking for. In doing so, they are also exposed to unplanned purchases which they might regret afterwards because the product turns out not to be what they expected it to be.
Once the shoppers are happy with the products and shops they found, they tend to be loyal to them and less adventurous about other places. Complaining about bad service seems to be challenging to foreign shoppers, as they either don't say anything or are surprised with the responses from local staff to their complaints.

Moderators
At the C-E-V level, expatriates might or might not have a companion when they go shopping and when pressured by time they will pick familiar brands. There is no general rule about what they would buy online and what kind of products they would rather buy in person in physical shops. As per their responses, it does not seem that the moderators as described by Fiores and Kim (2007) have a significant influence on their shopping behavior. Of course, in this particular target market, we should consider culture and cultural differences as the main moderating variable.

5. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Marketers should ensure the store has a good energy and vibe to it. Depending on the type of store, the atmosphere should offer a calmness that makes people want to browse/linger more, which means they will spend more money. Store layout is very important to customers. They want an easy-to-navigate experience that lets them walk through the store easily without interruption from clothing stacks, pallets, etc. Expatriates draw significant attention to clean and bright stores. They communicate that the brand cares about how they are perceived by the shopper.

Expats really enjoy buying local products. They are looking for new experiences and tastes that is why they moved abroad. However, they still like to buy brands/products from their home country because it gives them a bit of home feeling. It is recommended for stores to have a mixture of local and global brands. The host country could promote more of the products that are native to the country and in categories that are important to expats, while including more global brands. Expatriates want to have options but too many can lead to confusion and potential loss of sale.

Product reviews are a highly regarded source of information to the expatriates. This gives the shopper added confidence when buying an item. Expats will buy local products but they still like to buy brands/products from their home country because it gives them a little bit of home feeling. Making the emotional connection to the brand by tapping into the memories of eating/using the product in their home country and the feeling they had can help in stimulating sales. Admittedly, having shelves fully stocked at all times and adequate staff coverage throughout the day to assist with questions can help to potentially win expats' loyalty. It is imperative to include instructions on how to use the products. Providing instructions in multiple languages, including English, is an obligation when dealing with expatriates. If people can easily understand how to use the product, the outcome is a potential positive product review and referral by word of mouth to others.

6. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The integrative framework created by Fiores and Kim (2007) has proven to be applicable to expatriates as shoppers. The relevance of using both utilitarian and hedonic facets of shopping in the same framework was well represented by the sample participating in our research. Expatriates are an under researched target market and yet their power of purchase is not to be neglected and they are a factor of globalization of brands. The diversity of cultures in our considerable representative sample size legitimizes our findings. However, future research should focus on observation and interviews at the point of sale to better understand and describe expatriates journeys as a shopper abroad.

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Going for Gold: Volunteerism Best Practice in Youth Sport & Recreation

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Abstract

Organized sports and recreation activities have become an accepted part of youth culture. Participation has remained stable throughout and since COVID lockdowns (Outdoor Industry Association, 2021). Many of these activities rely on volunteers in order to succeed. These volunteers provide a range of services, not only as coaches and officials, but in leadership and support roles such as chaperones/transportation services, fundraising, and event management. Volunteer motivation to serve and intention to help have been tied to leisure, materialistic, egoistic, purposive, and external influences (Strigas & Jackson, 2003), providing major benefits to the sport organization and experience. The volunteer-based structure also presents sustainability and capacity challenges, as resources are constantly stretched. Without an appropriate incentive structure, volunteer participation can be episodic and inconsistent, resulting in a poor experience for the youth, and burnout among the volunteers (Herrtig, et Al, 2020). This research explores real-world solutions that have been developed and tested to build volunteer capacity, social capital and improved incentive structures in youth sport organizations. Using the case of Bluegrass Berms and the Kentucky Interscholastic Cycling League (KICL), we explore several examples of volunteer recruitment, training and retention linked to youth mountain biking. The research concludes with a discussion of best practices, and directions for future research.

Keywords: volunteer, youth sports, best practices, mountain biking

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High-tech sales: How salesperson roles are evolving with the new realities

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Abstract

Information Technology sales engagements continue to develop into ever more technical discussions and complex service/solution projects in the areas of Big Data, Internet of Things, and Artificial Intelligence. In today's changing, challenging high technology selling environment what are the most critical skills necessary to positively impact customer relationship outcomes? Foundational sales research has viewed relationship quality as a key measurement of customer success. Consequently, this sales research study explored how business customer perceptions of relationship quality are impacted by higher complexity solution sales.   Key antecedents were utilized to understand differences in skills/attributes needed in high tech information technology sales with solution complexity utilized as the primary moderator. The research results and insights were discussed.

Keywords: Sales, Information Technology, Solution Sales, Relationship Quality.

Thanks, That's Just What I Needed: How Celebrity Endorsements Build Consumer Self-Confidence

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Abstract

This paper uses McCracken's (1989) meaning transfer theory to examine consumers' use of celebrity meanings through the consumption of celebrity endorsed products to build confidence. Prior research has highlighted the use of product purchases to build one's self-confidence and the ability of a celebrity endorsement to increase consumers' confidence in their purchase of the product or the quality of the endorsed product. This research is the first to delineate the specific types of confidence that the use of a celebrity endorsement may provide consumers. The qualitative research design draws from 29 long interviews with individuals from varied ethnic backgrounds in the United States. Three forms of celebrity-evoked self-confidence emerged: validation, performance ability, and social insurance. While the first two are used to strengthen self-confidence, the third is used as a form of protection to confidence. The findings provide new insight into consumer's use of celebrity meanings in the construction of the self.

Keywords: Celebrity Endorsement, Self Confidence, Meaning Transfer Theory, Qualitative, Parasocial Relationships

Creating the New Normal: A Historical Approach to Understanding Marketing Agility and its Implications Across Business, Healthcare, and Social Welfare in a Post Pandemic World

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Abstract

COVID-19 has globally disrupted every domain of ordinary life. Many countries enacted shelter in place directives and additional safety guidelines to slow the spread of this novel virus. Such orders have resulted in simultaneous transformations in all facets of business. Anchored in historical, current, and prognostic lenses, this paper delineates the positive effects of marketing agility in response to uncertainty in the realms of healthcare delivery, general business and marketing practices, social welfare. The facets of marketing agility (i.e., adaptation, adoption, or innovation) are discussed and the implications of marketing agility for success within dynamically changing landscapes are outlined.

Keywords: Marketing Agility, Healthcare, Social Welfare, COVID-19

Yes, I Do Mind: Mindfulness and Shopping Experience in a Post-COVID World

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Abstract

The global aim of this paper is to incite research to explore and examine mindfulness in post-COVID era shopping experiences. Specifically, this paper examines the mindfulness concept and how future retailing research can integrate mindfulness into shopping experience from a customer journey perspective. Mindfulness is an underexplored concept in retailing that can contribute to a better understanding of how to improve shopping experience and to promote responsible shopping. This paper proposes that focusing on the role of mindfulness in shopping experience can lead to positive behavioral outcomes, such as consumer well-being and responsible consumption.

Keywords: Shopping Experience, Mindfulness, Omnichannel Shopping Experience, Customer Journey, Ethical Consumption

Toward a Diagnostic Approach to Assuring the Health of Complex Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

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Abstract

Entrepreneurial Ecosystem (EE) is a complex dynamic system whose participants need to have but are currently lacking good metrics and measurements of their outputs that reflect their contribution to the overall health of the system. We are proposing a preliminary model of such a complex ecosystem.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial ecosystem, entrepreneurial support organizations, entrepreneurship